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Arafat begins visit to Vietnam

HANOI (R) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived for an official visit to Vietnam on Saturday. Mr. Arafat flew to Hanoi from Beijing (see page 2). He was greeted by Vietnam's ageing President Vo Chi Cong and an honour guard of soldiers in the capital's main Ba Dinh square. Both men stood to attention as an army band struck up the Palestinian and Vietnamese anthems. Vietnam's communist government officially recognises the Palestinian state, and Mr. Arafat, who is chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, has visited Hanoi several times. Western diplomats said the latest visit, which Mr. Arafat is due to follow with trips to neighbouring Cambodia and Laos, has little significance beyond a reiteration of these countries' solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Hanoi's Communist Party newspaper Nhan Dan Saturday repeated Vietnam's "consistent support for the Palestinian people's just struggle." It said the main obstacle to progress in Middle East peace talks was Israel's refusal to comply with U.N. resolutions on the Middle East and Palestinian issues.

Omani council holds first session

MUSCAT (R) — Sultan Qaboos attended Saturday's inaugural session of the Consultative Council, Oman's first experiment in limited democracy. The council, whose 59 members were nominated by the public and chosen in a two-tier selection process involving community elders and government officials, replaces a wholly appointed State Consultative Council (SCC) set up in 1981. The Omani News Agency, received in Cyprus, quoted Sultan Qaboos as telling the assembly that "with the setting up of this council, a new era and a new experiment start in Oman." The council is authorised to review the government's draft economic and social legislation, to present proposals and opinions on the development of economic and social laws and on general policies. The process of naming community members from every administrative region naming three candidates for each seat. The sultan approved in November the names of the council's members which were submitted by the government after the list of the candidates were screened. He also decreed the council's functions.

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King honours Yousef Al Muasher

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday conferred the Kawab Medal of the First Order on Yousef Al Muasher in appreciation of his services to the national economy.

Onecker eyes Cuba

BERLIN (R) — Former East German Communist leader Erich Honecker, on the run from many of his former charges in united Germany, hopes to find permanent refuge in Cuba, his wife said in an interview published Saturday. Honecker, 79, who fled to Cuba in March, took sanctuary in the Chilean embassy there until Dec. 11 after the Russian government moved to extradite him. Russia has since said it is up to Germany and Chile to agree on Honecker's future. Margot Honecker said in an interview with a Berlin newspaper in Moscow that before going to Cuba the couple wanted to visit North Korea where her husband could receive special medical treatment. "Cuba would take us in. But we first want to go to Pyongyang where we could move into a state in the next house. North Korea and Cuba have doctors are available 24 hours for medical care," she told the daily Berliner Kurier.

Karrubi in Yemen

ADEN (R) — Iran's Parliament Speaker Mehdi Karrubi arrived in Aden, Yemen Saturday, Radio Sanaa reported. The radio quoted him as saying his talks with Yemeni officials would focus on regional issues and Islamic issues and how to promote trade between the two countries. Mr. Karrubi arrived after leaving Beijing where he spent five days at the invitation of the Chinese leadership.

Gunmen hijack Somali-bound tanker

CAIRO (R) — Somali gunmen commandeered a Saudi oil tanker off the coast of Somalia two days ago and forced it to sail to Sudan and Saudi Arabia, shipping sources said Saturday. The Saudi-owned Sea Skipper, a 6,174-deadweight-tonne tanker which flies a Panamanian flag, was hijacked in the Mogadishu harbour by 204 armed men on Dec. 11, the sources said. The hijackers ordered its Indian captain to sail to Port Sudan where they demanded political asylum in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt or Canada. Sudanese authorities allowed 180 of them to disembark. The others forced the captain to sail to an island off the coast of Saudi port of Jazan, the sources said, adding that Saudi authorities were now "in control of the situation." The sources had no other details.

Russian vice-president meets Afghan rebels

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Russian Vice-President Alexander Rutskoy Saturday pressed his former ally, Afghan leader for a prisoner swap. But U.S.-backed Afghan rebels have been resisting a prisoner exchange, holding out for further concessions, said several Afghan sources. Mr. Rutskoy said Friday the insurgents were bound to release some prisoners in keeping with an agreement reached at the first round of direct talks held in Moscow last month. He is expected to head off to Afghanistan on the last leg of a three-day nation tour that began in Tehran.

Polisario rejects U.N. report

ALGERIA (R) — Polisario guerrillas accused the outgoing U.N. secretary general Saturday of violating normal United Nations practice and plunging peace efforts in the disputed Western Sahara into a shambles. U.N. chief Javier Perez de Cuellar issued guidelines on Friday on who could vote in a referendum in the territory, a 15-year-long battleground between Polisario guerrillas and Moroccan troops. "We think this report is totally contrary to the normal practices of the U.N.," said Polisario spokesman Ibrahim Hakim, who is ambassador to Algeria of the self-proclaimed Saharan republic.

Ashrawi: U.S. cannot assume 'passive' role in Mideast talks

Israel defying integrity, assumption of peace process

Palestinians expect escalation of Israeli harassment

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The United States cannot continue to adopt a "passive" role in the impasse over Arab-Israeli peace talks since the Israeli rejection of negotiations with an independent Palestinian delegation violates the integrity of the entire Middle East peace process, Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi said Saturday.

Dr. Ashrawi also said the Palestinians would not attend the multilateral phase of the Middle East peace talks unless and until the bilateral negotiations make realistic progress. In any event, she said, "our political leadership" — the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) — is the only party authorised to make the decision in this regard.

The Palestinian delegation, except chief negotiator Haidar Abdul Shafi, returned to Amman from Washington Saturday. Dr. Abdul Shafi is expected to stay in the U.S. "on a private visit" for some time, officials said.

The Jordanian side to the joint delegation is expected home Sunday.

Dr. Ashrawi told a press conference Saturday afternoon that she expected the Israeli occupation authorities to step up their arbitrary measures against the Palestinians in the occupied territories in a bid to step up pressure on the peace negotiators to accept Israeli terms or withdraw from the talks altogether.

The Washington talks adjourned Wednesday until early January without making any tangible progress after two weeks of what came to be known as "corridor diplomacy" at the U.S. State Department to convince Israel to reverse its refusal to accept the Palestinian side as a separate entity in negotiations.

Dr. Ashrawi described the stand-off as "genuine and substantive" since the issue at stake was acceptance of the Palestinian identity and rights.

The Israeli stand is seen as a firm indicator of the Jewish state's determination not to recognise the Palestinians as a direct party and to shelve the responsibility of negotiations in Jordan.



Hanan Ashrawi

Jordan has reaffirmed the umbrella of a joint delegation to the Palestinians only to facilitate Palestinian participation by circumventing the Israeli rejection of an independent Palestinian delegation and that the actual negotiations on every aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict has to be negotiated independently between the Palestinian team and their Israeli counterparts.

Accusing Israel of seeking "to control and determine the Palestinian destiny," Dr. Ashrawi said the Jewish state was acting in open violation of the letter of assurance and invitations that the co-sponsors of the peace talks — the U.S. the Soviet Union — issued to the parties.

"There is definitely a Jordanian-Palestinian track and a Palestinian-Israeli track" in the letter of assurances and invitations, Dr. Ashrawi pointed out and affirmed that there was no contemplation of dismantling the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation in a bid to advance the Palestinian position.

U.S. President George Bush, expressing disappointment over the impasse in the talks, said Saturday that Washington would continue to play the role of a "honest broker" and stay away from intervening to end the stalemate.

But Dr. Ashrawi, member of a steering committee which guides the Palestinian negotiators, said it was only logical to expect the U.S. to step in and seek to break the deadlock. "I am saying that from an assessment of what happened so far and analysing what the Americans have said," she added.

The Israeli position "is in violation of... the whole integrity and assumption of the peace process," Dr. Ashrawi pointed out. "When you have a sponsor or a co-sponsor, they have a role to play."

(Continued on page 5)

Sharif Zeid meets delegates

Prime Minister Sharif Zeid and several members of the cabinet held a meeting Saturday with the Palestinian delegation to peace talks with Israel. The delegation briefed Sharif Zeid on the outcome of the Washington talks and exchanged views with him on the peace process, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Israel 'will not reject U.S. help' in determining next round venue

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Deputy Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said Saturday that Israel would not reject U.S. assistance in finding a site for the next stage of peace talks.

Mr. Netanyahu spoke to Israel Radio two days after he returned from Washington with the Israeli delegation to the negotiations, saying Jan. 7 was the agreed date for the next stage of talks.

However, the site of the meeting remained unsettled, he said. Israel wants the talks moved to the Middle East, the Arabs prefer them to continue in Washington.

Asked if Israel would accept a U.S. proposal for the site if the two sides could not agree, Mr. Netanyahu said: "We do not need U.S. help in this. Of course, we would prefer having direct contact with the Arab delegations."

"But they (the Arabs) apparently are still at the bargaining stage even on the direct negotiations," he added.

Israel had criticised the United States for setting Washington as the site for the December talks without consulting it first, contending that the move would set a precedent allowing Arabs to circumvent direct talks with the Jewish state.

Israel's Ambassador to Washington Zalman Shoval indicated Friday that Israel would most likely accept the Arab demand for Washington.

"I think my government would not make the place for venue an issue which would prevent the continuation of the talks," Mr. Shoval said.

The Washington talks were the second round of a Middle East peace conference that convened in Madrid on Oct. 30, bringing Israelis into direct negotiations with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians for the first time.

Mr. Netanyahu also said unrealistic expectations led to U.S. and Arab disappointment in the Washington talks.

Referring to U.S. President George Bush's statement on Thursday that he felt let down by talks between Israel and Syrian, "They have to be in the end at peace with us, that it is impossible to talk about recognising Israel's right to exist and on the other side negate all the minimal, necessary components that make up that existence."

30 detained in W. Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

AP — Israeli soldiers detained Saturday 30 Palestinian supporters of the Islamic fundamentalist movement Hamas, Arab sources and Israel Television said.

Arab reporters said soldiers raided a meeting of Hamas supporters at a vocational training college in the occupied West Bank town of Dahiyat Al Barid north of Jerusalem.

During the meeting, masked activists marched through the college with Palestinian flags calling for a continuation of the armed struggle against Israel and denouncing the peace talks, Israel Television reported.

The army command confirmed that 30 Palestinians had been detained at the college for questioning, but declined to give further details.

Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) has been outlawed by Israel who holds it responsible for many attacks on Israelis.

In the occupied Gaza Strip Saturday, five Palestinians were shot and injured in clashes with Israeli troops, an army spokesman said.

In Jerusalem, six cars were set on fire, five in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Armon Haazuv and one near the U.S. consulate in East Jerusalem, police said.

Three Palestinians were arrested on suspicion of the arson, Israel Television said.

Thousands of Israelis and Palestinians joined hands Friday in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silvan to protest Jewish settlers' efforts to take over homes in the Arab area.

The Israeli demonstrators, many from the Peace Now movement, waved Israeli flags and carried posters saying "stop settlements, negotiate now."

The settlers' campaign to take over six homes in the Arab quarter has been criticised by the U.S. State Department as a provocation while American-sponsored Middle East peace talks were under way in Washington.

Israel frees three Lebanese after South Lebanon blunder

JIBSHEET, Lebanon (R) — Israel freed three kidnapped Lebanese civilians in South Lebanon Saturday nearly 36 hours after its commandos grabbed the wrong men.

Diplomats in Beirut said hopes were running high that U.N. chief negotiator Giandomenico Pico would soon secure some results from his latest mission to Syria and Iran.

The three Lebanese, including part-time Reuters correspondent Shauki Fahs, were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Israel's "security zone" in South Lebanon.

Unshaven and haggard after questioning in Israel, Mr. Fahs, 43, shepherd Hassan Zhour and Kamel Nahal, who works for the television company, begged relatives when they reached their homes.

They were kidnapped, handcuffed and hooded Thursday night by helicopter-borne commandos near Jibsheet, the village where Israeli troops seized Hizbollah cleric Sheikh Abdul Karim Obaid in July 1989.

"During interrogation the Israelis concentrated on my contacts and knowledge of Hizbollah and threatened to keep me like Obaid if I didn't answer," Mr. Fahs told Reuters. "I wasn't beaten."

"I told them I worked for Reuters but they didn't care." It was a bitter homecoming for Mr. Nahal. His two sons and another child were killed when a booby-trapped torch they found at the scene of the abduction exploded as they played with it.

Lebanese security sources said the torch was planted by the Israeli troops in the hope that guerrillas would pick it up.

When he was told his two sons had died, Mr. Nahal collapsed. "I want to kill myself," Mr. Nahal, weeping, told relatives and friends. "Please don't be sorry for me if I kill myself today."

The Israeli army said on Friday it had seized the three men as "terrorist suspects." They were taken to Israel as part of a drive to end guerrilla attacks on its forces in Lebanon.

But the military announced 18 hours later after questioning the three that they would be freed on Saturday.

Lebanese security sources and Western diplomats said the Israelis were hunting leaders of Hizbollah but kidnapped innocent civilians by mistake.

"It was a ridiculous blunder and has apparently only served to put Hizbollah's leaders on high alert," one diplomat said.

Asked on Saturday whether the army was embarrassed over the affair, an Israeli security source replied: "Maybe, maybe."

Despite Israeli denials, the kidnapping prompted speculation the Jewish state was trying to pressure pro-Iranian groups to return its six servicemen missing in Lebanon or their remains.

Israel fears the Middle East peace talks, now in its final chapter, will end without the return of the Israelis — in particular, airmen Ron Arad, the only one believed to be alive.

(Continued on page 5)



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Saturday attends a cabinet meeting (Petra photo)

Regent, cabinet discuss returnees

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Saturday visited the Prime Ministry where he was sworn in to serve as Regent during His Majesty King Hussein's current visit abroad.

Prince Hassan chaired part of a cabinet meeting, which was attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker. The meeting discussed issues pertaining to coordination among government departments and problems facing Jordanian expatriates who returned from the Gulf region during and after the Gulf crisis.

Prince Hassan stressed the need to solve the crisis of returnees through international bodies assigned for such cases. The meeting also discussed the issue of communication and media and affirmed the importance of developing information systems at the domestic and foreign levels in a manner that fits with Jordan's standards and national interests.

The Regent called for giving social issues due attention and urged the government to continue its educational development programme.

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Kuwait launches fresh sweep against Palestinians, Jordanians

KUWAIT (R) — Hundreds of Palestinians are being forced out of Kuwait or are hiding at home hoping to avoid a new crackdown in the emirate, diplomats and Palestinians said on Saturday.

Police are mounting a sweeping security operation ahead of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit Monday.

"Kuwait is concerned that no security slip-ups happen during the summit," said one diplomat. "But the security operation also appears to be a cover to quietly weed out the remaining Palestinian and Jordanian elements left in the country."

Immigration department sources said last week the government would grant residence visas to 35,000 Palestinians out of an estimated 50,000 if they had a job, a sponsor, and had not cooperated with Iraqi occupation forces.

There were about 400,000 Palestinians in Kuwait before the invasion in August last year. Thousands fled during the seven-month occupation. Others left after liberation when the government made them redundant in reprisal for the Palestine Liberation Organisation's pro-Iraq stance.

Crown Prince Saad Al Abdullah Al Salem Al Sabah said in an interview this week: "Everyone who was in Kuwait before or during the occupation who cooperated with occupying forces, whatever the size or type of cooperation, we will not let him stay with us in Kuwait. It is the least we can do."

Non-Kuwaitis must apply for residence permits by the end of the year. If they do not, they face a \$34 fine a day.

Many Palestinians, who have lived in Kuwait for decades, said they were too scared to leave their homes for fear of being harassed or picked up. Police have set up checkpoints across the city.

Others have taken extended leave from their jobs. Some said they would leave as they could not afford to pay the fines. Palestinians said the government was dragging its feet over their applications until the deadline ran out.

But many were given exit visas allowing them between a week and a month to leave, on the grounds that they left the emirate and returned during the Iraqi occupation.

All Palestinians interviewed by Reuters refused to have their names disclosed for fear of reprisals. They said some were being held in schools pending deportation.

Witnesses saw at least two schools in Kuwait City patrolled by armed national guards. They told anyone who approached to move on.

One teenager said about 200 people, mainly Palestinians, were held in a police station.

A company which charters planes to Jordan said it had laid on two extra flights this week.

"The flights are completely booked. We usually have one flight a week, but this week we have three to Amman — all one-way tickets," an official said.

A Palestinian in his 20s said police stopped him at a checkpoint and asked to see his papers. When he could not produce his passport, they put him on a bus and took him to a police station. His family brought him the

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11 republics sign commonwealth accord, tell Gorbachev to leave

ALMA-ATA (Agencies) — Leaders of 11 of the 12 former Soviet republics signed agreements Saturday proclaiming a new commonwealth of independent states and putting a formal end to the Soviet Union.

President Mikhail Gorbachev, who did not attend the meeting in the Kazakhstan capital, will make a decision on his future soon, although it likely would not be Saturday, his spokesman was quoted as saying. Mr. Gorbachev is expected to resign.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the driving force behind the commonwealth, said at a news conference afterwards that the central Soviet government no longer existed.

"Now that we are no longer forcibly bound by the chains of the centre, when the centre has been destroyed and the totalitarian communist system has been destroyed, the field is open for forming a democratic commonwealth — the kind civilised countries should be in," Mr. Yeltsin said.

Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Gorbachev had agreed on Dec. 17 that the 74-year-old superpower would be dissolved before the end of the year. But, in keeping with the dizzying pace of events that rocked the Soviet Union this year, Saturday's outcome made

that moot.

The only republic not participating in the commonwealth so far is Georgia, which has pursued a fiercely independent policy since the failed August coup that touched off the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Yeltsin emerged as a hero because of his resistance to hardliners after the coup, and used that popularity to consolidate his hold on power. On Friday, Mr. Yeltsin consolidated control over the old central security service by seizing the powerful Soviet foreign intelligence organisation that was run by a close friend of Mr. Gorbachev.

Mr. Yeltsin said the presidents agreed to name former Soviet Defence Minister Yevgeny Shaposhnikov as interim head, until Dec. 30, of a unified military command that would control all nuclear and conventional forces.

The heads of the four republics with nuclear weapons also agreed that they will establish a permanent united command after that, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev said.

There are an estimated 27,000 nuclear warheads in Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan.

They also agreed that Russia would take over the Soviet Union's seat on the U.N. Security Council. In turn, Russia and the two republics already represented at the United Nations — Ukraine and Byelorussia — would push for all other participants in the commonwealth to have seats at the world body.

The other republics are Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tadzhikistan, Kirgizia, Uzbekistan, Moldavia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Soviet Ambassador to the U.N., Yuri Vorontsov, said on Friday he expected a request to the U.N. next week asking that the Soviet seat go to Russia.

Diplomats said Mr. Yeltsin was sending a letter to the permanent members of the Security Council — the United States, Britain, France and China.

In practice, admission to the United Nations as a new member or a successor state to a defunct nation usually comes after recognition by many states, leading to speculation that Russia would be recognised by the United States and others shortly.

The new commonwealth would probably be ineligible to join the United Nations as a full member as it does not meet the definition of a nation-state, legal experts said.

The Soviet Union, as a victo

(Continued on page 5)

Arafat vows friendship with China; official hints at Israel tie

PEKING (R) — Visiting Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat left China Saturday vowing eternal friendship, but a senior Chinese official hinted Peking would normalise relations with Israel.

Mr. Arafat left China by special plane after being presented with a photo album by Chinese President Yang Shangkun, the New China News Agency said.

Mr. Arafat inscribed in the book: "Long live the eternal friendship between China and the State of Palestine, let's advance together towards victory."

However Western diplomats believe Mr. Arafat was briefed on China's plans to recognise Israel.

A senior Foreign Ministry official declined on Friday to say when China would recognise the Jewish state.

But, speaking on condition he not be named, the official added: "In the historical perspective, looking at the trend, it is possible for the normalisation of relations between the two countries."

China's Premier Li Peng told Mr. Arafat Friday that the security of Israel should be guaranteed.

"The sovereignty and security of all Middle East countries including Israel should be respected

and guaranteed," the official agency quoted Mr. Li as saying.

China, which has long regarded itself as a champion of the Third World, has backed the Palestinian cause and officially recognises Mr. Arafat as president of the state of Palestine.

On seeing Mr. Arafat off, Mr. Yang said: "Let's work for our common victory," the New China News Agency reported.

Both Mr. Yang and Mr. Li reiterated Peking's support for Palestine.

But as part of China's initiative to play down ideology and improve diplomatic ties throughout the world, Peking and Israel have moved rapidly closer recently.

The head of the first official Israeli trade delegation to China said in November he believed the two countries would establish relations within months.

Security sources in Israel said Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens secretly visited Peking between Nov. 4 and 8, just after the launching of Arab-Israeli peace talks in Madrid.

He would have been the first Israeli minister in China.

The senior Foreign Ministry official declined to confirm the Arens visit, saying only that there had been visits of Israelis to Peking as tourists.

Syrian papers assail Israel for impasse in peace talks

DAMASCUS (AP) — Syrian newspapers Saturday blamed the lack of progress in Arab-Israeli peace talks in Washington on Israeli stubbornness.

"The next round of talks will be no better than the Washington talks if Israel's goals remain the same and if the international community continues to be a mere spectator," said the daily *Tishrin*.

"The Arabs are appealing to the international community to take a stand based on rights, justice and peace," the newspaper said. "The Arabs will never relinquish any part of their lands as long as Israel's stubbornness increases."

The newspaper said in its editorial that Israel's intransigence increased after the U.N. General Assembly recently rescinded a resolution that described Zionism as a form of racism.

Another newspaper, *Al Thawra*, called for the application of U.N. resolutions that demand an Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territories.

"For how long with it (the General Assembly) remain silent towards the suffering of a people which has been ruled by Israeli ideology since 1948, and when will U.N. resolutions become deeds through their long-overdue enforcement?" it asked.

The Washington talks stumbled when Israel refused to deal separately with the Palestinian delegation, which in the previous round of talks in Madrid had formed part of a joint delegation with Jordan.

Perez de Cuellar sets Saharan poll guidelines

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar issued guidelines Friday on who will be eligible to vote in a referendum on the future of Western Sahara that include anyone born of a Saharan father born in the territory.

The Polisario front, seeking independence for the former Spanish colony, has been waging a 15-year-long guerrilla war with Morocco, which controls most of the sparsely-populated territory, rich in phosphates.

A U.N.-sponsored ceasefire came into force on Sept. 6 as part of a plan for a referendum in 1992 giving the inhabitants the choice between independence or integration with Morocco.

A key issue between the two sides, which has led to several months' delay in implementing the plan, is who should be allowed to take part in the referendum.

This is complicated by the tribal nature of Western Saharan society and the ebb and flow of people across borders.

Polisario accuses Morocco of bringing thousands of supporters into the territory to stack the vote and is expected to regard the U.N. guidelines as favouring Rabat.

Under the U.N. plan, an identification commission has been working on the basis of a 1974 Spanish census which counted more than 73,000 inhabitants.

The commission had been updating the census by taking account of births and deaths and population movements.

In instructions for reviewing applications to vote, the secretary-general wrote: "It is necessary... that the link with the territory of people absent in 1974 be solid and demonstrable."

"Firstly, it is considered that an appropriate link to the territory exists when the applicant was born of a Saharan father born in the territory."

The guidelines add that "people who fled colonial rule cannot

Situation worsening in Somalia capital

NAIROBI (AP) — Somalis are starving to death because aid agencies cannot distribute food in the war-torn capital, and tensions between combatants are increasing daily, an aid worker said Friday.

"People are more and more desperate," said Patrick Vial of the French humanitarian agency Doctors Without Borders, who arrived in Nairobi Thursday after five months in Mogadishu, the Somali capital.

Since clan-based fighting erupted Nov. 17, more than 4,000 people have been killed and 8,000 wounded in the conflict, most of them women and children caught in the cross-fire.

Food, fuel and medicines are also running low, although an international airlift of 270 tonnes of mostly medical supplies and equipment, fuel and a small amount of food began Thursday.

The conflict has involved a fight between supporters of President Ali Mahdi Mohammed and the ruling United Somali Congress (USC) chairman, General Mohammed Farrah Aidid. The warlords lead subgroups of Somalia's large, central Hawiye clan from which the USC draws its support.

Mr. Vial said the mood among the combatants "gets more tense daily."

The continuous shelling of Mogadishu's port and widespread banditry by heavily armed independent gangs have prevented aid agencies from approaching supplies of relief food in the city or bringing in large amounts of food.

Mr. Vial said that international agencies have enlisted a force of more than 1,000 neutral men — who are paid in food — to guard more than 10,000 tonnes of food stored at the port. But the agencies cannot approach the supply.

U.N. makes no changes in sanctions against Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The U.N. Security Council completed on Friday a periodic review of its sanctions against Iraq but made no changes.

Sanctions were first imposed a few days after Iraq invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990, and were later tightened.

This was the fourth periodic review, none of which has resulted in any easing of sanctions.

Referring to reports that some 2,000 Kuwaitis were believed still held in Iraq and to Baghdad's alleged failure to fulfil other U.N. demands, the council asked Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to prepare a factual report on Iraq's compliance with various resolutions.

The report would be available in time for the council's next sanctions review, conducted every 60 days since the adoption on April 3 of a sweeping resolution designed to strip Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction and ordering it to pay reparations from any oil sales.

A statement read to reporters by council President Yuli Vorontsov of the Soviet Union also noted that Iraq had not yet taken advantage of two resolutions, adopted in August and September, allowing it to sell up to \$1.6 billion worth of oil over six months to finance the purchase of food and other humanitarian supplies.

The United Nations would control all the proceeds of the oil sales, 30 per cent of which would be earmarked for reparations and other debts stemming from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Baghdad refuses to sell oil under those conditions, which it considers an infringement of its sovereignty.

With the aim of alleviating the plight of Iraqi civilians, the council also asked its Sanctions Committee on Friday to consider streamlining procedures for approving the import by Iraq of a variety of humanitarian items.

The committee was asked to draw up a list of goods about whose sale to Iraq it would simply have to be notified — as is the case now with food and medicine — instead of giving its prior approval.

Also, in the case of goods requiring prior approval, any committee member raising an objection would have to provide specific reasons.

The proposals for easing procedures were first made by non-aligned members of the council who have expressed concern about the effects of continuing sanctions on Iraqi civilians.

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Dim Christmas in Christ's hometown

By Sami Aboudi
Reuters

NAZARETH — Christian Arabs in Nazareth, the home of Jesus, have little time for Christmas joy this year as they face the threat of Israeli land confiscations.

In Nazareth, the largest Arab town in Israel, few stores display Christmas trees and lights. Only a handful of tourists roam the market area next to the Basilica of the Annunciation, where Mary is said to have been told she would bear Jesus.

"While the Western world is celebrating Christmas, we have no feast at all. It is already Dec. 20 and there are few signs of the feast," said Canon Riah Abu Al Assal, head of the Anglican Church in Nazareth.

The city's 60,000 Arabs, including some 20,000 Christians, have had their hopes for a better holiday season dashed.

Already ground down by a stagnant economy, they, like the rest of some 800,000 Israeli Arabs, feel the Jewish state is tightening the screws on them to make way for more than 350,000 Soviet immigrants who have flooded since 1989.

Israeli Arabs, who often complain of unequal treatment and neglect by the right-wing Israeli government, now say there is a new threat to their existence — revival of 16-year-old land

confiscation orders.

They say the orders have been reactivated by a government hungry for land and to build homes for Soviet immigrants.

It is the most worrying sign of what they already see as a bleak future. Some are also worried by the drying up of government funds to Arab municipalities, now diverted to Soviet immigrants.

"They have already seized 92 per cent of our land and more to come," said Mansour Kardoush, a human rights activist who runs a legal aid centre in Nazareth.

"In effect, they want to put a Jewish community between every Arab town and its neighbour, to turn us into ghettos," he said.

Over the past year, Israel has notified Arab landowners in the village of 'Ain Mahel, near Nazareth, and residents of the village of Ramyah, near Karmiel, to leave their land.

It has also begun building on Arab land seized near the village of Kawkab Abu Al Hajja, near Acre.

Israeli Arabs, who increasingly insist they be called Palestinian or just plain Arab but not Israeli, acknowledge that the wave of Soviet migration and the explosion in construction has boosted employment for Arab labourers.

But they say Arab unemployment is still the highest in Israel at some 28 per cent.

Many predict the Arabs

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Gunmen ambush Turkish police car; 1 dead

ISTANBUL (R) — Three gunmen ambushed a police car and shot dead a patrolman and wounded another, the semi-official Anatolian news agency said Saturday. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Friday night's attack in Istanbul's Kartal district. Turkey's far-left guerrilla group Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left) has said it has killed four generals, two Americans, a Briton and at least 30 policemen this year.

Bulgaria, Turkey agree on confidence building

SOFIA (R) — Bulgaria and Turkey, for years barely on speaking terms, agreed Friday on confidence and security building measures and military contacts, Bulgarian Defence Ministry officials said.

Bulgarian Chief of General Staff General Lyuben Petrov and his Turkish counterpart General Dogan Gures signed a document specifying advance notification of military activities within a 60-kilometre zone on either side of the common border. It also provided for observers at military manoeuvres in the zone if they involved more than 12,000 troops, 300 tanks or 250 artillery pieces.

Group denies man held in Italy is member

BEIRUT (R) — The Fateh Revolutionary Council (FRC) denied Friday a Palestinian charged in Italy with belonging to an outlawed guerrilla group was a member. In a statement issued in Beirut, the FRC said Khalid Birawi Thamer was never a member. The group is led by Sabri Al Banna, known as Abu Nidal and the world's most wanted guerrilla leader. Thamer was detained in Rome Monday and accused of subversive association and membership of an armed band. He was suspected by investigators of belonging to Abu Nidal's FRC. Thamer was extradited to Italy in 1985 after being arrested at Frankfurt airport on suspicion of trying to smuggle more than 10 kilograms of explosives into West Germany. Held during an Italian investigation into Abu Nidal's activities, he was released in 1988 when his period of pre-trial detention had expired.

Kuwait gets S. Korean supertanker

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait Friday received the first of four oil supertankers being built in South Korea and named it Al Awdah (Return) to mark the emirate's liberation from Iraq. The Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) said the 281,000-tonne very large crude carrier (VLCC) was one of four contracted with Hyundai and Daewoo of South Korea before the Iraqi invasion in August 1990. KUNA quoted an official at the state-owned Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) as saying the three other VLCCs would be delivered next year. In addition to the four VLCCs, KOTC, which had a pre-invasion fleet of 30 tankers, was also looking for two refined products carriers, three liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) carriers and three Ethylene/LPG carriers.

Israel to delay Wagner concert

TEL AVIV (AP) — The Israel philharmonic Friday postponed a concert of works by German composer Richard Wagner to allow time for its subscribers to be polled on the controversial performance, a spokeswoman said. The concert, scheduled next Friday, raised a storm of protest since many Israelis associated the 19th century composer with Hitler. The orchestra's musicians voted last week to break a 53-year ban on playing Wagner. But the philharmonic's advisers decided that because of the "sensitivity of the issue," it would poll season ticket holders before supporting the concert. Philharmonic spokeswoman Israela Moskovitz said Friday that the orchestra's management "respects the decision" and therefore is postponing the concert.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO	
17:30	Les Badaboks
17:35	La culture en chansons
18:10	L'ecole des films
18:40	News in French
19:15	Carpet de notes
19:30	News in Hebrew
20:00	News in Arabic
20:30	Empty Nest
21:10	Murder She Wrote
22:00	News in English
22:20	All the Rivers Run

PRAYER TIMES	
06:54	Fajr
07:10	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:26	Dhuhr
14:12	Asr
16:36	Maghreb
17:58	Isha

CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetich Tel. 810740	
Church of God Church, Tel. 637785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.	
De la Santa Church Tel. 661757	
Terremoto Church Tel. 623466	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.	
Anglican Church Tel. 623383, Tel. 625543.	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 772061.	
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751.	
Armenian International Church Tel. 683236.	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295.	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter- Day Saints Tel. 823824, 654932.	
Church of the Nazareth Tel. 675691.	

WEATHER	
It will be partly cloudy and winds will be light to moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and sea calm.	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Zein Zaghloul	
638591	
Dr. Salameh Dabbous	
770751	
Dr. Adel Dabbous	
612177	
Dr. Hussein Haddad	
731267	
Fina pharmacy	
661912	
Fardous pharmacy	
778336	
Al Asema pharmacy	
637055	
Nairwah pharmacy	
623672	
Al Salama pharmacy	
636730	
Yacoub pharmacy	
644945	
Staneson pharmacy	
637660	
IBRD:	
Dr. Lutfi Al Shalabi	
623101	
Al Shalabi pharmacy	
275825	
ZARQA:	
Dr. Nash'at Amari	
677111	

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Yesterday's high temperatures: Am- man 10, Aqaba 17, Humidity readings: Amman 69 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.	Khalifah pharmacy 985417
EMERGENCIES	
Food Control Centre 637111	
Civil Defence Department 661111	
Civil Defence Immediate	
630341	
Police	
199	
Rescue Police	
152, 621111, 637777	
Fire Brigade	
891228	
Blood Bank	
775121	
Highway Police	
843402	
Traffic Police	
896390	
Public Security Department	
630321	
Hotel Complaints	
605800	
Price Complaints	
661176	
Water and Sewerage	
Complaints	
891467	
Amman Municipality	
787121	
Telephone Information	
(directory assistance)	
121	
Overseas Calls	
010230	
Central Amman Telephone	
623101	
Abdull Telephone Repairs	
661101	
Jordan Television	
773111	
Radio Jordan	
774111	

Water Authority 680100	
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615	
Electric Power	
Company	
636381	
RJ Flight Information	
08-53200	
Queen Alia Int. Airport	
08-53200	
HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Hussein Medical Centre	
813813/32	
Khadija Maternity, J. Amn	
644281/6	
Al-Shifa Maternity, J. Amn	
644241/2	
Jabal Amman Maternity	
642362	
Mathar, J. Amman	
636140	
Palestine, Shamsi	
664171/4	
Palestinian Hospital	
660131	
University Hospital	
845845	
Al-Musader Hospital	
667227/9	
The Islamic, Abdali	
666127/57	
Al-Ahli, Abdali	
664164/6	
Italian, Al-Muhajir	
771012/3	
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	
775111/26	
Army, Marka	
891611/15	
Queen Alia Hospital	
602240/50	
Amal Hospital	
674155	
ZARQA:	
Zarqa Govt. Hospital	
(09)963323	
Zarqa National Hospital	
(09)900520	
Ibn Sina Hospital	
(09)986732	
Al Hilam Medical Hospital	
(09)990990	
IBSID:	
Princess Basma Hospital	
(02)775555	
Greek Catholic Hospital	
(02)772275	
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital	
(02)247100	
AQABA:	
Princess Haya Hospital	
(03)314111	

FOR THE TRAVELLER	
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information depart- ment at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06)53200-5, where it should always be verified.	

ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
09:00	Jeddah (RJ)
09:05	Aqaba (RJ)
09:05	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:05	Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

10:30	Beirut (RJ)
10:45	Cairo (RJ)
11:00	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
10:00	Madrid, Rome (RJ)
10:00	Paris, Geneva (RJ)
10:15	Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
10:20	London, Brussels (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
09:45	Cairo (MS)
10:30	Monrovia (SU)
10:20	Larnaca (CY)
10:35	Beirut (ME)
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
06:15	Beirut (RJ)
07:00	Aqaba (RJ)
11:10	Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:45	Cairo (RJ)
13:00	Larnaca (RJ)
20:00	Jeddah (RJ)
20:10	Damascus (RJ)
20:10	Riyadh (RJ)
20:30	Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:10	Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)
22:00	Bangkok (RJ)
22:45	Sanaa (RJ)
ARRIVALS	
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
10:25	Cairo (MS)

MARKET PRICES	
Upper/lower prices in file per kg	
Apples	500/600
Bananas	500/450
Banana (Mekkanam)	500/450
Beans	500/500
Cabbage	150/100
Carrots	220/180
Cauliflower	220/120
Cucumber (large)	230/170
Cucumbers (small)	500/450
Eggplant	200/140
Garlic	750/600
Onions	180/120
Grapes	500/400
Greaves	300/400
Lemon	100/130
Macrow (large)	150/130
Macrow (small)	500/350
Olive	800/700
Onion (dry)	400/1100
Oranges	400/420
Potatoes	500/420
Pepper (sweet)	500/420
Potato	500/300
Sage	500/300
Spinach	150/100

Trains would solve traffic, fuel problems — minister

AMMAN (J.T.) — Interior Minister Jawdat Al Sbihi has recommended to the government that trains be operated between Amman and Zarqa, through Ruseifa, in a bid to reduce traffic problems and cut down on fuel consumption.

According to Ministry of Interior sources, the minister has submitted a request based on a study conducted by a specialised committee, calling for trains to operate from Amman to Zarqa and back to transport passengers.

Under the plan, train stations will be established midway at Ruseifa and stops will be created at platforms in Amman at Mahatta, Raghdan bridge and the railway terminal near the old municipality building in downtown Amman, the sources said.

According to the plan, the ministries of transport and interior will undertake to work out a traffic rate for passenger rides between the two cities and will also fix departure and arrival hours at both ends.

Jordan is one Arab country which still lacks proper railway services though elements for establishing railroads exist and the country's need for them is great, the sources said.

At present, the Aqaba Railway Corporation operates a line to carry phosphate produced at Hassa and other mines in the south to

Aqaba for export.

There is also a line linking Amman with Zarqa and one that goes to Maan, but they are operational. The railway linking Amman with Damascus has not been operating for years. The railway dates back to 1864 when a German engineer proposed to the Ottomans to build a railway line to connect Damascus with the Red Sea. The idea was forgotten until 1900 when Ottoman ruler Sultan Abdul Hamid, announced a railway plan, linking Isanbul with Hijaz in the western part of the Arabian Peninsula to help transport pilgrims to the holy places in Mecca.

According to ministry sources, a higher transport council for roads will be set up to take charge of planning transport operations in the Kingdom.

The council will be entrusted with coordinating transport-related matters with neighbouring Arab countries, including the question of axial weights.

Transport Ministry sources said that the transport sector in the Kingdom accounts for nearly eight per cent of the total national income. They said that transport matters are of vital importance not only to Jordan but for the whole region since the Kingdom has a central geographical location, linking Europe with Asia and Africa via the port of Aqaba.

Private sector investments needed, official says

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan is currently involved in implementing an economic restructuring programme which makes it almost impossible for it to acquire further easy-term loans, increasing the importance of private sector investments in the Kingdom, according to Mohammad Asfour, president of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce.

More investments on the part of the private sector are needed to ensure a greater contribution margin of the gross domestic product, Mr. Asfour said in a statement Friday.

Mr. Asfour urged the government to open the way for the private sector to have equal opportunity with the public sector in investments and noted that steps to this effect should be taken urgently in the coming year to reform the taxation system and to reduce customs duty to cope with the new economic challenges.

Mr. Asfour also recommended the government promote the op-



Mohammad Asfour

erations of the trade sector, which affects all aspects of the national economy, and to increase the country's trade links with the outside world.

In the new year the government should remove all administrative and routine obstacles and take practical steps towards helping Jordanian products to compete with foreign goods abroad, Mr. Asfour said.

In order for the economic restructuring programme to succeed, the country ought to promote exports, reduce imports and curtail the high rate of cash supply in the market by directing capital towards more investments in income-generating projects, he said.

Iraqi musician to give concert today; proceeds to help Iraqi people

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A oud-Arabic luth or guitar — concert will be given by leading Iraqi artist Nasir Shamma today at 7 p.m. at the Palace of Culture in Amman.

Nasir Shamma is more than just a talented performer. He is a great composer and a musician with a broad understanding of his art and the many different angles from which one can look or rather listen to music.

He explained to the Jordan Times that while music can be an entertainment and an ear-pleasing art, he uses it as a message carrier, with different compositions tackling different subjects.

Listening to Mr. Shamma this month in Amman, once at the Jordanian Writers Association and another time at a private recital, one is amazed at the virtuosity he displays. Beyond lightning fast and precision playing, Mr. Shamma has introduced modern techniques to the traditional and oriental art. Using glissandos, treble pizzicatos — to suggest birds for instance — and Western chords he obtains an effective blend, and each time, succeeds in conveying the proper message he wants to

send to his audience.

One of the most impressive pieces by Mr. Shamma is the "Incident at Amiriah" which is an outstanding "sonic image" of the tragic event that took place during the Gulf war.

Suffice to look at the faces of the listeners after Mr. Shamma has played it to realise the impact it makes on them.

From the quiet before the storm to the frightening sirens and the deafening sound of explosions, Nasir Shamma paints a picture of the tragedy with astonishing precision. One can almost visualise the images behind the music.

Mr. Shamma has also developed a playing technique allowing performers who have lost one or more fingers to play the oud. This should not come as a surprise if one remembers the famous French gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt — a leading musician in the forties and fifties — who was able to play with unparalleled speed and expression with a three fingered left hand.

Mr. Shamma's human stand and non-commercial approach to music in general and to the oud in particular is rare to find in a field which has become a tough and merciless industry. The proceeds of today's recital will go to the children of Iraq and will help supply them with food and medicine.

Arab council assails Israeli practices in Jerusalem

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Arab Ministers of Housing and Reconstruction, which concluded a meeting in Cairo Friday, has called on the international community and world organisations to stand firm in the face of Israel's plans to change the demographic character of the Arab city of Jerusalem, Minister of Public Works and Housing Saad Hayel Surour said in Amman Saturday.

The council reviewed a Jordanian working paper outlining Israel's ongoing practices and plans in the Holy City designed to evict the Arab population and swallow up the whole city of Jerusalem, said the minister in a statement upon his return from the Cairo meeting.

Israel's measures in the city of Jerusalem run contrary to U.N. resolutions and violate international laws and the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the council said in a statement after reviewing the Jordanian working paper.

According to Mr. Surour, the council decided to send requests to the United Nations to adopt necessary measures to halt Israel's practices, which violate the international legitimacy. The council also demanded that the U.N. organisation interfere to stop Israel's encroachment on Arab homes and real estate in the Arab sector of the Holy City.

It also called on the U.N. to ensure the return of all documents stolen by the Israelis from the Sharia Courthouse in Jerusalem and to put an end to all acts of aggression on Arab and religious sites.

The council has decided to request the Arab League to link the Jerusalem Documentation and Restoration Centre to the Arab League Educational Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALESCO), which will spend some \$320,000 on financing the centre's work in the 1992-1993 period, Mr. Surour said.

He said that the council will convene a regional Arab conference on national housing strategies in Cairo in late December 1992.

Ministry to increase effort to stem food smuggling

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Supply is determined to step up cooperation with concerned authorities to stem the leakage of food supplies from Jordan through smuggling and a meeting is due to be held soon to work out details of a plan to achieve that goal, Minister of Supply Mohammad Saqqaf announced Saturday.

Mr. Saqqaf made the statement at a meeting with the Supply Council during which a review of the general economic and supply situation in the Kingdom was made and stress was laid on the need to ration food consumption and curtail increases in prices of food.

According to a statement following the meeting, discussions tackled the margins of profit made by merchants and



Mohammad Saqqaf

dealers in a number of food particularly commodities fresh meat.

Mr. Saqqaf emphasised the need for profit margins to be

lowered and for more supplies of good quality fresh meat to be made available, the statement said.

The minister said all fresh meat supplied by the slaughterhouse should carry a distinguished stamp to tell the difference from the imported, frozen meat, the statement added.

Mr. Saqqaf called on merchants and dealers of food commodities to attach price tags to each commodity at their stores for the benefit of the consumers.

Mr. Saqqaf reiterated the government pursues its policy of issuing food coupons for sugar, rice and powdered milk and added that the Ministry of Supply would sell other food supplies, which it imports, at cost price.

Cold front to bring more rain Tuesday

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A cold front being formed in southern Greece is expected to affect Jordan and the rest of the eastern Mediterranean region by Tuesday morning, bringing rain to different parts of the Kingdom, according to the Department of Meteorology Saturday.

Sunday morning is expected to be relatively warm as temperatures will rise to 12 degrees centigrade and the forecast for Monday is even warmer, a department spokesman said.

But the nights are expected to remain cold and nearly mostly clear, Jamal Al Mousa said.

He told the Jordan Times that Monday evening will bring in strong southern winds prior to the cold front Tuesday. Referring to the rains in southern Jordan Saturday morning, Mr. Mousa said that an isolated cold mass affected that region for six hours, bringing in rain and snow. But the mass later moved eastwards towards northern Saudi Arabia, he said.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, earlier reported that the southern regions of Jordan were affected by heavy rain and snow in the morning hours of Saturday and that civil defence authorities were put on alert for emergencies.

According to Mr. Mousa, the areas of Muta, Shobak, Tafleh, Mazra, Ghor Al Safi, Qasr, Al Rashidieh received snow as well as rain in the morning Saturday.

Tafleh acting Governor Abdul Karim Malahmeh turned the different areas of the governorate inspecting the condition of roads in Rashidieh, Grandal and Basira. He announced that all roads were passable and that civil defence, public works and municipal council services were put on alert to deal with emergencies.

The governor urged all citizens living in low lying areas to keep away from wadis and streams and to move their animals from these regions to safer areas.

Officials deny potable water in Salt is polluted

SALT (J.T.) — There is no truth in a local weekly report about pollution of the drinking water in Salt, announced local government and municipal officials here Saturday.

Balqa Governor Faleh Al Gharraibeh and Salt Mayor Abdul Razzak Ensour emphasised this fact at a press conference held here, noting that samples of the drinking water in the area are subjected to regular tests at Health Ministry laboratories. Thorough tests conducted on

the water distributed to the local households for domestic use have proved it to be pure and there is no truth in a report published Thursday in a local weekly to the contrary, said Governor Faleh Gharraibeh at the press conference.

Samples of water taken from the water tower and from water tanks mounted on roof tops were tested at the laboratories and proved to be pure, said Mr. Gharraibeh.

coming from the treatment plant at Wadi Stubeib was being used solely for irrigation in the Jordan Valley farmlands.

Dr. Ensour said stressed that reports in the local weekly, which he declined to name, were groundless.

Dr. Samir Awamleh, director of the Health Department in Salt, told the press conference that teams from his department were maintaining and monitoring strict control over water supplies in the region on daily basis.

Pakistani squash team in Jordan

AMMAN — Zaem Aziz Qureshi, manager of Pakistan International Airlines in Jordan, extends his gratitude for His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Ben Talal for inviting the PIA squash team to this hospitable country and for strengthening the distinguished relations between Pakistan and Jordan.

The area manager of PIA in Jordan held a reception and dinner party Saturday on the occasion of the visit of the squash team to Jordan, headed

by the world champion Jansher Khan.

The area manager of PIA in Jordan is very pleased to hold this party for both the Squash Association Members — i.e. Jordan and Pakistan — and hopes that visits of squash teams will continue between the two brotherly countries.

The PIA squash team began playing exhibition matches Saturday and will continue to do so until Monday, after which it will return to Pakistan on Wednesday.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Art exhibition by Jumana Al Hussaini at Abdul Hameed Shomran Foundation Gallery — 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- ★ Exhibition of ceramics by Iraqi artist Salim Jamil Al Nouri at Alla Art Gallery.
- ★ Art and ornamentation exhibition by Sabah Hadidi at the Royal Cultural Centre.

Canadian university president in town to promote cooperation

RAMTHA (J.T.) — The president of the University of Windsor in Canada is on a week-long visit to Jordan for the purpose of promoting cooperation between his university and the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST).

Dr. Ron Izumi has been holding meetings with JUST President Dr. Kamel Ajlouni promoting exchanges between the two educational institutions and to evaluate the collaborative nursing education project sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, according to a JUST announcement.

The nursing project, which began in July this year, is providing about \$910,000 over a four year period in terms of materials and teaching programmes aimed at upgrading the quality of baccalaureate nursing education at JUST, located near the northern city of Ramtha.

According to the statement, JUST faculty and teaching assistants receive annual clinical training at the University of Windsor. Also, instructors are exchanged to teach in areas where the school may be short-staffed.

It said that equipment and supplies needed for the project are being offered by the Canadian institution to improve JUST's nursing laboratories and other related facilities.

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Noblesse Crystal.
Porcelaines Roynaud.
Royal Copenhagen.
Royal Worcester
Sabatini.
Saint Hilaire Silver
Spode.
Val Saint Lambert.
Waterford Crystal
Wedgwood.

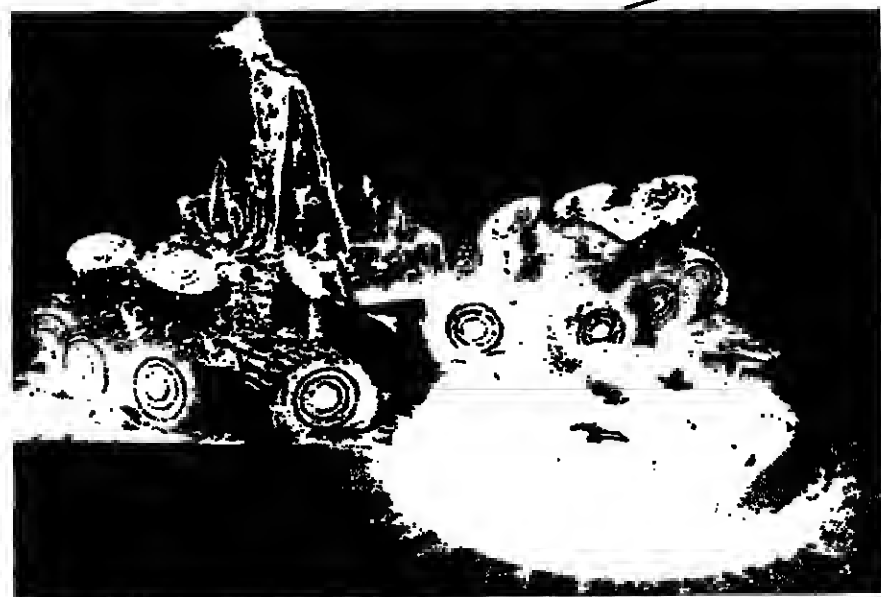


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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation.
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Changing and unchanging worlds

EVEN though Russian President Boris Yeltsin's bid to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is viewed as a long-term political aim, it nevertheless sheds more light on the new international order that is emerging from the ashes of the collapse of the communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In his latest message to Brussels, the Russian leader was very clear in spelling out his long range objectives when he described his country's eventual association with NATO as "very serious." Not only that. The heir to the throne in Moscow has specifically called for the acceptance of former Warsaw Pact countries, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, in the Western alliance as an immediate goal. Such dramatic changes in the international order has led British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd to comment: "Today signifies the coming together of West and East." U.S. Secretary of State James Baker described the profound revolutions in the former communist countries at the recent inaugural meeting of the new NATO forum, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, as a "historic day for the alliance and for all of Europe."

The complete turnaround in Moscow and the other former communist capitals of Eastern Europe is indeed historic, but we have to see whether this historic occasion augurs well for international peace and security or is just a new gigantic development on the international arena that may spell gloom and despair in the developing countries of the world, including, of course, the Arab countries. With the clout of the Western club increasing worldwide, one wonders how the smaller countries of the world are going to cope and fare in the wake of the rise of Western power and whether their voice will get weaker and meaker by the year if not by the month.

One would have thought that the Arab leaders would rise up to the new challenges by regrouping their countries as fast as possible before whatever influence they have fades away completely and their voices get fainter than ever. It would seem that the fast moving developments across the world would offer an added incentive for the Arab governments to rejuvenate the Arab League and rekindle the dormant Arab nationalism in a bid to retain for the Arabs a place of relevancy. Yet all recent efforts to heal Arab wounds, inflicted by the Gulf war, have failed simply because there is no apparent appreciation or recognition of what is going around the Arab World. It would be too simplistic to point the finger to the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait last year as the root cause of contemporary Arab malaise and disfiguration. The real culprit in such a dismal Arab state of affairs is the apparent death of Arab nationalism and the rise on its ashes of provincial and parochial Arab interests that developed vested interests in the status quo of Arab affairs. But that is not how the Arab peoples feel and think about their national aspirations. When these peoples take command of their future through the spread of genuine democratic institutions, then there will be a brighter future awaiting Arabs everywhere.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I expressed criticism of Arab countries, especially the oil-rich states for their hostile attitude towards Jordan. These countries interpret Jordan's efforts to mend fences with the Arab oil-rich states as a drive to ensure the return of their financial assistance to the Kingdom, said the paper. These countries realise more than any other country in the world that, except for Saudi Arabia, not a single Arab state has honoured its financial commitment towards the Kingdom nor did it respect the Baghdad Arab summit resolutions which provided for continued financial assistance to the Arab countries comforting Israel, the paper pointed out. These countries, which speak of their determination to refrain from helping Jordan, are deceiving themselves for the simple reason that they had never offered Jordan any help, the paper continued. It said that these oil-rich states would commit a grave error if they imagined that the Jordanian people would die of hunger, thirst or cold because of the oil-rich states' hostile stand, the paper added. It said that the Jordanians are ready to confront all hardships and ready to maintain steadfastness and confrontation because they are determined never to go back on their pledge to defend their homeland and their nation. While stressing this fact, Jordan is making it clear that it will succumb to no one except to the will of God and it will remain steadfast following in the footsteps of the earlier builders and forefathers who endured all the difficulties and overcame all obstacles through resolve and perseverance, the paper said. It said despite its meagre resources, Jordan will survive through the deep pride of its people and their achievement and with the help of numerous friends around the world.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is justified to express his satisfaction over the outcome of the aborted peace talks in Washington simply because such a situation serves Israel's interests, said Al Dastour daily. But President Bush has not right to express his disappointment with the outcome of the meetings because it is his administration which should be held responsible for the results, the paper said. President Bush's disappointment resulted from the U.S. administration's disregard of the rights of the Palestinians and its condoning of Israel's practices in the occupied Arab territories and at the negotiation session that led to the deadlock, the paper pointed out. The U.S. president should realise that it was Israel's insistence on ignoring the independent representation of the Palestinian people at the Washington talks that led to the collapse of the talks, the paper continued. The United States adopted a very negative stand with regard to Israel's transgression and refrained from exercising any pressure on Israel to force it to respect the agreements and to comply with the requirements of the peace process, said the paper.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Adjustment for our own sake

TWO objections are frequently offered against the economic adjustment programme, sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), sometimes from the same sources. The first objection claims that the programme was formulated to serve the interests of the lenders, even if that meant squeezing the Jordanian people through higher prices and more taxes because the IMF is, first and foremost, an agent acting on behalf of the lenders. The second objection argues that the economic adjustment programme did not try to solve the indebtedness problem. On the contrary, they claim, it tried to inflate it and let it grow. The evidence is that Jordan will not be required to make a net transfer of funds in favour of the creditors as a whole during the years of the programme. Jordan will be allowed to enjoy more fresh credit facilities than the repayments made and will be given an arrangement whereby the old debts will be rescheduled with a relatively long grace period.

Perhaps the best answer to those two objections is to point out the apparent fact that they contradict and discredit each other. Those who negotiated the programme on behalf of the IMF wish that Jordan were able to repay all the principal and interest installments when they fall due, but they find such a case rather impossible. They found out that, even if all installments and

interest payments were suspended until further notice, that would not be enough because there will remain a further gap in foreign exchange, which has to be closed by foreign grants and fresh credit, otherwise certain commodities will disappear from the domestic market and their prices will go sky-high, just like what happened during the foreign exchange crisis of 1988/1989. The reason is obviously that Jordan's earnings of foreign exchange are not sufficient to accommodate the immediate needs even if debts were not served and consequently foreign aid were frozen, especially in the absence of Arab aid and the impossibility of raising funds through credit facilities.

The claim that the adjustment programme will squeeze the Jordanian people and cut down on their standard of living in order to save resources for the benefit of the lenders is refuted by the fact that there will be no net repayment of debt during the programme. Of course, there will be some repayment of commercial banks' loans with harsh terms and conditions by taking soft loans for which write-off and relief will be more applicable in the future. The sacrifices, which the people will be called upon to make, are for our own sake not for the sake of the lenders.

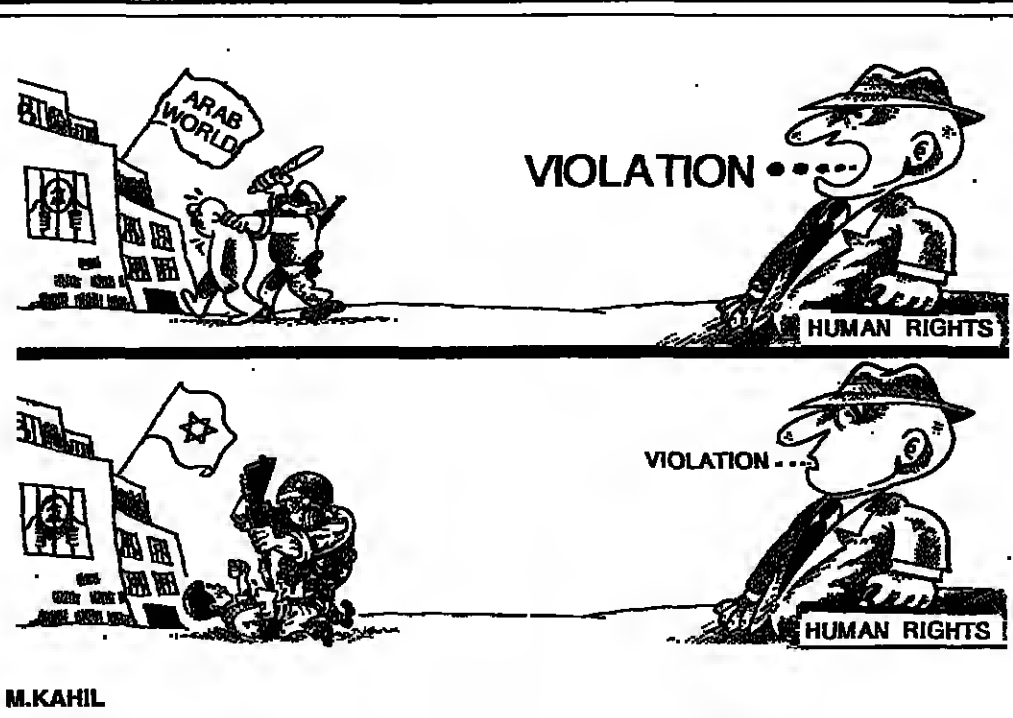
The other claim that the programme is meant to pile up loans at the expense of the Jordanian economy, to keep it more dependent

and exposed to foreign influences is meaningless. The IMF and the creditors will not refuse to get paid on time or even prepaid, if Jordan is able to make the payments. However, repayment of all the debts may mean hard times for people, beyond tolerance, and no one in his right mind would want that to happen.

The programme deals with the foreign debt crisis in the following manner.

- Rescheduling of debts with a grace period of ten years.
- Reducing interest rate payable during the grace period to a symbolic level.
- Securing new sources of soft credit to help in repayment of old debt and close the gap in the balance of payments.
- Using this time to reform the economy in a systematic manner.

There is nothing in the programme that obliges us not to repay the outstanding debt or to borrow fresh funds that we don't need. The programme is a life vest which we can use to avoid drowning and be able to swim towards the safe shore. It is up to those who prefer to drown to do it, but they should not ask their people to join them in their suicidal endeavour.



Is Zionism racism?

By E. Yaghi
Special to the Jordan Times

ZIONISM arose in the nineteenth century Europe and is an adjunct of European colonialism. It is absurd that Jewish settler colonialism is legitimised in the age of decolonisation. The very formation of the state of Israel is not only nationalist political Zionism, but a principle of not a Jewish state but a state for Jews. A Jewish state would be a society modelled on the laws of Moses with a religious basis, but a state of Jews, which was born in the mind of Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, would be as it has now become, a state free of prophetic or Talmudic tradition. In his diary, Herzl determined how to rid Palestine of its indigenous population either by force or trickery.

Zionism was and still is a political ideology to establish a state which would "gather" all Jews in Palestine. Naturally, there is a sharp distinction between Judaism and Zionism because the former is a religion practised by Jews throughout the world while Zionism is the fire that keeps the portrayal of Eretz Israel burning. Zionism is not a concept to integrate Jews into other societies all over the world, whether in the United States, Western Europe or Soviet Russia, but a manipulation of money and political power to finance a military state for Jews only. Paralleling anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism is a distortion of facts and truth. It is pertinent to note that both Arabs and Jews at the time of Ishmael and Isaac, descended from the sons of Prophet Abraham and were both Semites. However, Judaism has ceased to be a race of

people in the true sense of the word, but a religion.

The word "race," correctly speaking, is a biological term. Terms, therefore, such as the "French race" or "English race" are erroneous and misleading. Popular concepts of "race" with biological ideals led to the misuse of race classifications and the massacre of millions of people under Hitler's regime. Today racial discrimination is more subtle. The South African government justifies its apartheid policies by arguing that separation of races contributes to more positive development of both.

Zionists argue that they are not racist when they claim that non-Jews have the right to vote and be elected to the Knesset. They also cite the "anti-racist" law passed in the Knesset in 1986, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, colour or ethnic heritage. However, a government need not imitate the Nazis, who openly boasted racial superiority, to be judged as a racist state. The "anti-racist" law in Israel is unique. Even though it stipulates that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, there can be and is discrimination on the basis of religion. "Religion" was purposely left out of the law and religious discrimination is not illegal, thus making it common practice, with the blessings of the Israeli government, for the inferior and bigot treatment of non-Jews.

Israel was proclaimed a state like no other because it was declared a state of the Jewish people. This applies not only to holders of Israeli passports but to all Jews wherever they live. This is like saying the official religion of Jordan is Islam, therefore, all

Muslims, the world over, must become Jordanian citizens and procure Jordanian passports. Terrorism and violence are trademarks of Zionist history. David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, Menachem Begin, Moshe Dayan, Yitzhak Shamir, along with the rest of the Israeli higher echelon and who were mostly born outside Palestine and therefore alien to it, happen to all have been members of the Jewish Agency for Palestine during the period of the British Mandate, which planned and coordinated Zionist underground terrorist activities or were active members of the illegal underground terrorist organisations.

While Israeli leaders today use international platforms to indignantly protest the Palestine Arabs' justification to fight for their rights in their own homeland, they should be reminded of their own Zionist record of how they acquired the homes, lands, property and country of the Palestinians, a process which still continues as evident in the Jewish confiscation of Arab homes in Silwan. The Zionist movement, from the beginning, sought to achieve a Jewish majority in Palestine and establish a state for Jews on as much of the land as possible. This has been achieved by the continuous promotion of Jewish mass immigration, confiscation of Arab tracts of land and homes which Jews call the "inalienable property" of the Jewish people and displacing of Arabs from lands and jobs whenever their presence conflicted with Zionist interests.

Zionism has ignored the existence of native Palestinians, declared them non-people and proclaimed their land empty in

accordance with the application of 19th century European colonial techniques to the Asian and African continents. Zionism is also a nationalist theory which encourages the extermination of the Palestinian people.

Because Resolution 3379, passed in 1975 by the U.N. General Assembly and equating Zionism with racism has been rescinded, conditions might possibly worsen for Palestinians living within the occupied territories even though since the resolution was passed conditions never improved for the indigenous non-Jewish natives of Palestine. However, rescinding the resolution is an effort to overlook all the years of bloodshed during Israel's reign of terror on the part of the members of that "peaceful" body, the U.N., who supported military aggression against Iraq and who are still enforcing economic sanctions. And, after all, the moral integrity of the U.N. is at stake! That same integrity which never enforced U.N. resolutions 242 and 338 which the state of Israel conveniently and completely ignored. And this professed moral integrity does not hear the cries of the victims of Israel atrocities that are committed daily in the name of democracy. Zionist "assured supremacy" is guaranteed by the West and most specifically, by America. The non-recognition of the Palestinian people "was the cornerstone of Zionist policy" initiated by Chaim Weizmann and faithfully carried out by David Ben-Gurion and his successors. This diplomacy can be seen at the Washington peace conference where Israel refused to negotiate with an individual Palestinian representation.

Bosnia-Herzegovina — Yugoslavia's next hot spot?

By Hugh Pain
Reuters

BELGRADE — Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavia's landlocked central republic pointing like an arrowhead into the heart of Croatia, was once the trigger for the worst war the world had known.

In 1991, with conflict already flaring on its border, it is trying to avoid again being the cause of a wider war.

The European Community's agreement on Tuesday to recognise the independence of Croatia and Slovenia means the end of Yugoslavia within the borders created in 1918, but leaves undecided the future of its four remaining republics.

Also unresolved is whether Croatia will be allowed to secede with all its present territory, or whether the lands inhabited by its 600,000-strong Serb minority will be left behind.

will die in Bosnia. Militarily it would be easier for us, but it is not human for us to desire this to happen."

The capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina is Sarajevo, whose name still strikes a dreadful chord in the world's collective memory.

It was there on June 28, 1914, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian empire, was shot dead along with his wife, with consequences that spread rapidly from the Balkans to set off World War I.

Perhaps with this in mind the republic's mixed population rubbed along well enough until the current unrest in Yugoslavia began.

But Krajina, a large Serb area in Croatia, has said it will proclaim itself a republic on Thursday and if this were to have any practical effect, Krajina would want to join not with distant Serbia but with the Serbs next door in Bosnia.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Most of their lands border not Serbia but Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose ethnic make-up — 44 per cent Muslim, 31 per cent Serb and 17 per cent Croat, plus other small minorities is the most varied in Yugoslavia.

This volatile mixture and its position, sandwiched between Croatia and Serbia, put it at severe risk of being drawn into the war that has killed several thousand people in the past six months.

Croatia's Serbs violently oppose being dragged into independence, and the Serb-led federal army supports them, avowedly in the name of self-determination.

Tens of thousands of these Serbs have already fled to Bosnian towns and the violence has spilled across the border, most recently in a series of explosions in the southern town of Mostar, raising tensions in the republic.

The Croatian chief of staff, General Anton Tus, last week frankly admitted that Bosnia's entry into the war would help his cause by stretching the resources of the federal army.

But he said the cost would be high. "If thousands are dying in Croatia, then tens of thousands

This in turn would certainly trigger moves by Bosnia's Croats to unite with newly independent Croatia, leaving some two million Muslims alone in a fragmented homeland.

To pre-empt this possibility Bosnia-Herzegovina's astute Muslim president Alija Izetbegovic, last October enlisted the support of the republic's Croats to declare Bosnia-Herzegovina "sovereign."

Although the Serbs were offered greater autonomy, their deputies walked out, seeing the move as a step away from Serb-led Yugoslavia.

Mr. Izetbegovic has also said that if Croatia and Slovenia became independent, his republic would do likewise — a move bound to be resisted by Belgrade.

The secession and impending recognition of their northern neighbours "will put the Bosnian Muslims and Croats in a hot corner, as they will be forced to ask for independence and the Serbs will refuse. I can see there will be trouble," said a Western diplomat.

Another diplomat agreed: "There is going to be a lot of heat on the non-Serbs in Bosnia to stay in Yugoslavia, and that is going to be a problem."

U.S. gropes for influence as Soviet Union crumbles

By Carol Giacomo
Reuters

WASHINGTON — The United States, accustomed to influencing and sometimes dictating world events, is mostly a spectator to the crumbling of the Soviet Union and analysts say it may be powerless to avert chaos there.

U.S. officials, diplomats and Soviet affairs experts differ on how much leverage Washington may still have. But they agree it should strive to persuade the breakaway republics to meet concerns about nuclear weapons safeguards, economic stability and respect for human rights and borders.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's mission to Moscow,

Kiev, Minsk and possibly other republican capitals starting on Saturday now takes on added weight.

The visit was precipitated by Ukraine's overwhelming vote on Dec. 1 to secede from the Soviet Union.

But an even more historic act occurred on Sunday when the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia — largely Slavic republics controlling the bulk of Soviet populace, power and treasure — announced the dissolution of the Soviet Union and agreed to a "commonwealth of independent states" in its place.

Far longer than many analysts thought wise, the Bush administration remained loyal to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and his notion that the central author-

ity in Moscow could remain a basis for a stable post-Soviet confederation.

Events of the past week changes that, although President George Bush still deeply appreciates Mr. Gorbachev's role as the leader who made possible the death of communism and the freeing of Eastern Europe.

"I think the Soviet Union as we've known it no longer exists," Mr. Baker said on Sunday in a television interview.

While predicting there would be efforts to keep "some sort of a centre," he acknowledged the U.S. spectator role, saying: "Who's to say what the powers of that (centre) will be? Who's to say whether it will be a loose confederation of sovereign states,

independent republics or... some sort of commonwealth or whether it will be more than that."

Senior State Department officials emphasise that the Soviet people will determine the outcome of the revolution.

Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said on Monday the communique issued by the Russian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian leaders was comforting because it endorsed many principles Washington has laid down as markers for better relations between the emerging republics and the United States.

But even though the disintegration of the seven-decade-old Soviet Union has been peaceful, the future risks are apparent.

Mr. Baker referred to the "great danger associated with

these transformations" such as a Yugoslavia-like civil war "with nuclear weapons thrown in." The Soviet arsenal is dispersed among Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Byelorussia.

Graham Allison of Harvard University, who has advised Soviet democratic groups, expressed similar fears and said that, even without civil war, the trend is towards a crumbling of authority that may alter even existing republican borders.

Added Gabriel Schoenfeld of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies: "There has been a tendency in debate here to overemphasise the role of the United States... (it) will not shape the outcome no matter what it does."

Brookings Institution, in an interview with Reuters, agreed the United States "can't prevent the slide into chaos."

"Everybody who's been there and comes back says the same thing — that it's degenerating into a Third World country and the worst part is not just the breakdown of the standards in terms of everyday life but the lack of hope and the despair."

One problem, U.S. officials say, is that events are moving so fast it is hard to assess one country before another occurs. Another is that as the only remaining superpower, the United States fears making mistakes and is perhaps more cautious than usual about deciding how it will act.

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'U.S. cannot assume passive role'

(Continued from page 1)

intervene. Certainly this is not passive. And there may be constraints and considerations — domestic, international or external — for the U.S. not to play immediately an effective role, but we don't think they can maintain such a passive, spectator role."

"I think they have a lot of clout with the Israeli government that can be used to bring Israel around to comply with the agreements that put together the peace process," she said. "It is a question of having the political will and the predisposition."

Asked whether the Palestinian side might call for the reconvening of the Middle East peace conference which adjourned in Madrid in November, Dr. Ashrawi said:

"Of course, we are keeping the option open. It is always possible. But we don't think it is probable because within the mechanism of the invitation one party has the veto right. Israel insisted on this as a precondition."

Under the ground rules set by the co-sponsors in response to Israeli pressure, the peace conference could be reconvened only with the consent of all parties involved.

The Arab-Israeli bilaterals are tentatively scheduled to reconvene on Jan. 7 in Washington, but Israel appears to maintain its demand that the talks shift to the Middle East. However, observers expected the negotiations to resume in Washington on Jan. 7.

Dr. Ashrawi said the Palestinian delegation was informally familiar with the letter of assurances that the U.S. has provided to Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon prior to the peace conference but the Americans had not formally provided copies to the Palestinian team, which has also received an American letter of assurances.

"We asked for them, but they told us 'we can tell you what's in them,' but put off providing copies to a 'later stage in negotiations,'" Dr. Ashrawi said. In any event, she added, "I don't think it is a great secret what is in them."

Answering another question, Dr. Ashrawi said the Palestinian delegation did not expect any Israeli mistreatment per se of the negotiators, but predicted that the occupation power would escalate its arbitrary measures against the Palestinians living in the occupied territories in an attempt to pressure the delegation into

either accepting the Israeli conditions or quitting the peace talks. "One thing we have learnt is that Israel is capable of creating worse and worse conditions even when we think it has reached the rock bottom," she said. "It can always find more and more drastic measures."

She described the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation as "hostages of the peace process," and added: "The harassment of the captive Palestinian population... (as a way) of manipulating and exploiting (Israel's) illegal power over the captive population in order to create hostilities, in order to send a message to the Palestinian delegation that peace is very costly (and) in order to force us to withdraw and therefore be ready to face the consequences of the withdrawal."

Dr. Ashrawi said the Palestinian delegation had learnt in Washington that there was no change in the Moscow venue or Jan. 28-29 date for the multilateral phase of Mideast negotiations. But she refused to "enter into any discussions over these talks."

"The only side that can decide on this issue is our political leadership, the liberation organisation," she said. "We refuse the conditions on the bilateral talks and we insist that there should be progress in the bilaterals before we go to the multilaterals."

Sources close to the Palestinian delegation said the negotiators had asked Washington that the PLO, which has so far been kept on the sidelines of the peace process because of Israeli objections to dealing with the organisation, should be invited to attend the Moscow conference.

The multilateral phase is expected to have an enhanced participation, including the European Community, the Gulf Arab states and the Arab Maghreb states, Japan and Canada among others. The Moscow talks will discuss issues such as regional resources, including water, movement of refugees, the environment and disarmament.

Dr. Ashrawi said the Palestinians were also hoping for a bigger role for the European Community to the peace process and hinted that they would like to see European pressure on Israel to break the impasse in the bilaterals.

While Dr. Ashrawi was reserved in her criticism of the U.S., Palestinian negotiators were more sceptical of the Amer-

ican role in the peace process.

Washington "is not expected to play an active role as a co-sponsor of Arab-Israeli talks in the near future because of its preoccupation with internal policies and issues related to the emerging new Russian commonwealth," delegate Saeb Erekat was quoted as saying by the Associated Press.

Dr. Erekat said while the joint delegation turned down eight proposals submitted by Israel to break the Washington stalemate since all of them "rejected a separate Palestinian-Israeli track," the U.S. had asked the Palestinians to "comply with the Israeli demands."

Samir Abdullah, another delegate, said Israel had agreed to the Jan. 7 date but not committed to Washington as the venue.

"Arabs want negotiations to reconvene in Washington," Mr. Abdullah told AP. "But they (Israelis) kept playing their same old tone: 'We want negotiations to shift to the Middle East.'"

The Palestinian delegation is expected to cross the River Jordan to the occupied territories Sunday.

Arafat — in the eyes of the beholder

By Pascal B. Karny

THIS book, worth reading, is a timely one, published in 1991 by William Heinemann Ltd. The authors, John and Janet Wallach, are both American Jews. Their book was painstakingly written, and their reporting is fair and unbiased.

John Wallach was the BBC's first visiting foreign affairs correspondent and still contributes regularly. Wallach is foreign editor of the Hearst Newspapers and has won many journalism awards, including the 1987 Edwin Hood Award for his coverage of the Iran-contra affair. Janet Wallach has written cover stories for the Washington Post magazine. The Wallachs are the co-authors of a highly praised book about the Palestinian intifada titled "Still Small Voices."

I enjoyed reading this clear and lucid book and I recom-

mend that it be read by everyone interested in the Middle East problems in general and the Palestinian problem in particular as it gives a good insight into these issues. To be able to write this book, the authors travelled far and wide, especially in the Middle East countries, and met many of Arafat's relatives, friends and close advisors. They have also interviewed hundreds of key personalities, including Western and Middle East leaders, both Arabs and Jews.

The book is not a biography of Arafat in the strict sense of the term but rather one on Arafat as seen or beheld by persons who came into contact or dealt with him. Nevertheless, the book reveals many aspects of the private life of Arafat, as well as of his parentage, both of which have been so far shrouded in mystery. This was the result of very long hours of interviews the authors

had with Arafat. Thus, the interest in the book does not lie solely in finding out things about Arafat himself, but also in the wide-ranging investigation, carried out by the authors, on the Middle East problems and the persons and countries involved or interested in these problems.

The hardback book consists of 482 pages arranged in 22 chapters. In addition, it contains copies of some important documents on the Palestine question, a glossary on major Palestinian organisations, a bibliography and a conclusion. The New York Times commented: "It is a book compre-

hensive in scope and detail."

In the "conclusion" part of the book, at the page 465, the authors state: "As Jews, we must insist that Israel's security needs not only be met but guaranteed; as Americans, we must insist the Palestinians' national rights be secured."

BOOK REVIEW

They add: "We have come away convinced that the PLO leader wants a peaceful solution, a reconciliation of territory for peace.... That it is a life and death struggle which can only be resolved by nego-

tiations between the opposing sides."

The authors reported also that Arafat told them: "In this moment in history, we have the right to be treated as human beings. Self-determination is a sacred right for everybody, for every nation, for every people. I am waiting for an Israeli de Gaulle come and sign the peace of courageous men: for the sake of new generations of Israelis and for the sake of our own generations, for their children and for ours."

The epilogue of the book is one of the most exciting part as it narrates the sincere but alas, fruitless mediation undertaken by Arafat between Saddam and the Kuwaiti leaders before the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

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Kuwait launches fresh sweep

(Continued from page 1)

passport and after seeing he had returned to the emirate during the occupation, they gave him an exit stamp. He must leave within two weeks.

A 58-year-old Palestinian man, who has been out of a job for 16 months and lived in Kuwait for 30 years, was packing up his family and leaving for Amman on Saturday to start again.

"I am going to start from scratch. I don't have a job in Amman, no family, nowhere to stay, but I must go. It is obvious they are not going to give us residence permits," he said.

He said Palestinians who returned to the emirate while it was under occupation or had sent their luggage out and had an Iraqi

entry stamp in their passports saying so were not being allowed to stay.

"According to authorities here, we entered Kuwait in an illegal way because we have no entry stamp to Kuwait. We had to come via Iraq," he said. "We have only God to depend upon in the future."

A Palestinian woman in her forties said security men took her husband, a gardener, from their home 10 days ago on the grounds that he worked during the Iraqi occupation.

She said he telephoned her to ask for warm clothes on Thursday and told her he was being held in a school in preparation for deportation.

"It's the end of a chapter for us," said her son.

Israel releases three Lebanese

(Continued from page 1)

Israel considers Sheikh Obaid its trump card in arranging an exchange of the missing servicemen for hundreds of Lebanese prisoners held in the Jewish state and the "security zone."

Mr. Pico, having won the release of all British and U.S. hostages since August, was in the Syrian capital Damascus on

Saturday after his latest mission to Tehran, diplomats said.

The U.N. envoy is pressing for the release of Arad and two Germans, the last two Western hostages held in Lebanon, and the return of the bodies of killed U.S. and British captives.

"With Pico's record of success, we of course expect him to come up with something good soon," said a diplomat in Beirut.

11 republics sign agreement

(Continued from page 1)

rious World War II power, is a founding member of the United Nations and a permanent member of the Security Council with veto power.

As an inducement to Soviet leader Josef Stalin to join the United Nations, Byelorussia and the Ukraine were given separate seats in addition to that of the Soviet Union.

The leaders rejected the 60-year-old Gorbachev's suggestion of a temporary "commonwealth citizenship" to avoid ethnic conflicts.

"This (the commonwealth) is not a state. Therefore it can have no citizenship," Mr. Yeltsin said. The agreement has to be ratified by the 11 republican parliaments.

The Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had gained their independence after the failed coup that precipitated the collapse of the union.

The presidents of the commonwealth member states will establish a supreme coordinating body.

In addition, a council of the member states' prime ministers would be formed to coordinate economic policy.

Mr. Gorbachev, who came to power in March 1985 and unleashed the most sweeping reforms in the nation's history, will make a nationally televised address, according to his spokesman, Andrei Grachev. He did not say when that would occur.

Mr. Gorbachev "will make a decision on what has happened in Alma-Ata in the nearest future," said Mr. Grachev, whose remarks were reported by the Interfax news agency.

At his news conference in Alma-Ata following the signing ceremony, Mr. Yeltsin said he wanted an orderly transition of power.

"We are treating Mikhail Gorbachev with the proper respect and don't want to keep the country's tradition that was started in 1917 to bury and rebury each head of state and consider him a criminal," Mr. Yeltsin said. "To a civilised country, one should put an end to this."

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Jordan Times

Trenary will not compete for 1992 Olympic team

NEW YORK (AP) — The Olympic dream has been shattered for Jill Trenary.

Continuing ankle problems, an inability to adjust to new coaches and discomfort with changes in the sport have forced the three-time U.S. figure skating queen to withdraw from next month's National Championships. Although she is not ruling out going after a berth on the U.S. team in 1994, Trenary will not pursue a spot at Albertville.

Those three spots will be decided at the U.S. nationals in Orlando, Florida, in early January.

"I gave it my best try and felt there were too many stumbling blocks and barriers along the way I could not overcome," the 1990 world champion said Friday. "I won't say one thing put me over

the edge."

The 23-year-old Trenary hasn't recovered quickly enough from a right ankle injury, which led to a staph infection and required two operations. She missed the entire 1991 season.

She also is having problems with bursitis in her left ankle.

"It's a combination of continuing ankle and foot problems and other things," she said. "I feel strongly and good about the decision."

With Trenary sidelined, the United States still swept the medals at last year's World Championships. Kristi Yamaguchi, Tonya Harding — the defending national champion — and Nancy Kerrigan won those medals and will be heavy favorites to make the Olympic team.

IOC to use tougher qualifying standards

MILAN (AP) — International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Juan Antonio Samaranch has said tougher qualifying standards will be used after the Barcelona Games to improve events jeopardized by an overflow of competitors.

In an interview with Italian sports daily Gazzetta dello Sport of Milan, Mr. Samaranch said all nations "legitimately established and recognized" will be accepted into the IOC.

However, he said he saw a threat in the spreading number of new members and stressed that "after Barcelona, all countries will have the right to parade a flag in the Olympics, but many will not have the right to compete if

they have not reached acceptable technical levels. We will set tougher standards. ... It's the end of Olympic tourism. It's an unavoidable decision."

The Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania recently gained independence from the Soviet Union, which may split further. Likewise, Yugoslavia may disintegrate with the republics of Slovenia and Croatia seeking independence.

Mr. Samaranch also said that IOC will put aside protocol and red tape to allow the entry of a unique Soviet team in the winter Olympics at Albertville, France, in February.

Regarding the summer games in Barcelona, Spain, Mr. Samaranch said a meeting with representatives of the 12 Soviet republics is scheduled in Lausanne, Switzerland, in March to discuss a joint participation.

"We will ask those representatives to develop a plan to have a unique team in the Olympics. I don't know which flag they could use and how the team will be called. This will be discussed later on," Mr. Samaranch said.

The IOC president also said his organization will wait for governments and other political entities to decide on the sovereignty of nations before it recognizes them.

"We are waiting for an EC (European Community) decision about the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia to see clearly into the problem."

Mr. Samaranch was somewhat critical of the decision of the international Ski Federation to recognize Slovenia and allow Slovenian skiers to compete in the World Cup.

"One must not run ahead of history, one must be cautious. The recognition of a new member must come after the country has been recognized by the United Nations and by IOC," Mr. Samaranch said.

The European Community has said it will recognize Slovenia and Croatia if it meets a list of criteria. Germany has said it will recognize the two republics by Jan. 15 and other European countries are expected to follow.

Gascoigne could still play for Spurs — manager

LONDON (R) — Tottenham manager Peter Shreeves hopes England midfielder Paul Gascoigne will still play for the English first division club this season despite his impending transfer to Italian club Lazio.

Gascoigne was originally set to join Lazio on May 31 next year in a £5.5 million (\$9.9 million) transfer.

But Lazio officials said this week they hoped to sign Gascoigne, who has not played since injuring his knee in last season's F.A. Cup final, by the middle of January.

On Friday, Shreeves said he had not given up hope that Gascoigne could return to the Tottenham side to help their European Cup Winners' Cup bid and

defence of the F.A. Cup. "Nothing is certain and nothing is clear cut," he said. "There is still a possibility of seeing 'Gazza' in a Spurs shirt again."

"Paul is doing fine. His training has been stepped up and he is coming through remarkably," Lazio officials said Wednesday that Gascoigne could move to Italy as early as next month.

The officials spent five hours discussing Gascoigne's transfer with his Tottenham club bosses in a bid to move the controversial midfielder as soon as possible.

The deal was not concluded but Lazio administrator Maurizio Manzi said: "We are optimistic. By the middle of January we think Gascoigne will be a Lazio player."

SPORTS NEWS IN BRIEF

Snow blankets Winter Olympic venues

ALBERTVILLE, France (R) — Snow, the best friend and possible worst enemy of the 1992 Winter Olympics, fell Saturday over France's Albertville region, host to the February Games. Alpine Olympic venues reported snow more than 70 cm (27 inches) deep. Some 10 cm (four inches) covered the valley town of Albertville. A couple of snowless winters in recent years had caused concern among organizers. But their biggest fear is that too much snow could disrupt communications between the 13 venues. The Cojo 92 Organising Committee will use an armada of snowploughs and has stored 20,000 tonnes of salt to spray on roads.

Scottish clubs hope for winter break

GLASGOW (R) — Scotland's premier division soccer clubs hope the unpopular 44-game season will be scrapped next year after a discussion document was given a favourable reception at a league management committee meeting. The major teams plan a 36-game campaign, including a winter break after 22 matches. Scottish League Secretary Peter Donald said Friday there had been "sufficient interest and a willingness to discuss it further." The premier league would keep its 12 clubs but after the winter break the top eight would break away and play 14 more games to decide the title. The bottom four would join the top four in the first division in promotion and relegation playoffs.

Happel appointed Austrian manager

VIENNA (R) — Ernst Happel, Austria's most successful soccer coach, was appointed national team manager, faced with the daunting task of bringing a demoralised team back as a force in the international game. Happel, 65, whose contract with Austria's Swarovski Tyrol expires on Dec. 31, has been charged with leading the team through the World Cup qualification over the next two years. Happel, a former Austrian international, was manager of the Dutch team beaten by Argentina in the 1978 World Cup final. He also tasted success at European club level with Hamburg, Feyenoord Rotterdam and FC Bruges. Austria reached the World Cup finals in 1990, but have struggled since, firing two managers.

Graf leads field of 28 players in Tokyo

TOKYO (AP) — Seven of the world's top 10 female tennis players, including Steffi Graf of Germany, will compete in the Toray Pan Pacific Open in January, organizers said Friday. Other top-rated players entered in the 28-woman field include third-

ranked Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina, No. 4 Martina Navratilova of the United States, No. 5 Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain, No. 6 Jana Novotna of Czechoslovakia, No. 7 Jennifer Capriati of the United States and No. 10 Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere of Switzerland. The \$350,000 tournament begins on Jan. 28 at Tokyo Metropolitan GYM.

Young Brazilian driver joins Minardi

IMOLA, Italy (AP) — Christian Fittipaldi, the 20-year-old nephew of former Formula One champion Emerson Fittipaldi, will drive with the Italian team Minardi in the 1992 Formula One season. Minardi officials said that the Brazilian, who will be the youngest driver on the formula one circuit next season, signed a one-year contract. Minardi said it also has option to extend the driver's through 1994. Other terms were not disclosed. Christian Fittipaldi, winner of the intercontinental title in Formula-3000 this year, is the son of Wilson Fittipaldi, a well-known driver in the 1970s along with his brother Emerson, Formula One champion in 1972 and 1974 and now drives on the Indy-car circuit in the United States. Christian Fittipaldi will replace Pierluigi Martini, who joined Scuderia Italia. The Young Brazilian will begin tests of his new car in January, Minardi said.

British designer returns to Ferrari

MARANELLO, Italy (R) — British designer Harvey Postlethwaite has rejoined the struggling Ferrari Formula One team as technical director, it was announced Friday. Postlethwaite was with Ferrari for much of the 1980s before switching to the Tyrrell team.

Johnson wants to play in all-star game

AUBURN HILLS, Michigan (AP) — Magic Johnson is leaving the door open for a possible appearance in the NBA all-star game in mid-February. Johnson, who retired from the Los Angeles Lakers after testing positive for the virus that causes AIDS, said at a news conference Friday that he would like to play in the game. His name is on the all-star ballots. "I don't know what's going to happen, election-wise," said Johnson, who is accompanying the Lakers on their current road trip. "If I'm elected, I'll have to see what (NBA Commissioner) David Stern has to say. So, there's really no sense talking about it. We'll have to wait and see." Johnson said his doctor doesn't want him to play. "So right now I'm not playing," Johnson said. "We'll see about later. I'll take my doctor's advice. But I can do what I want to do. I retired because I wanted to. I didn't have to. I'm not saying I'll go against my doctor. I want to live. It's not just wanting to play a basketball game. Plus, I have another person to consider now. My wife wants me to stay off that basketball floor."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY DECEMBER 22, 1991

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Richter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: The Winter Solstice on the first day of Capricorn puts you in a position to make solid plans for the future that will provide added abundance in the days ahead.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) This is your day to do pretty much whatever you would like so think out early what means the most to you and go after it with a positive attitude.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Whatever you would like to do that does require quiet discussions with those of experience is just great but keep your plan confidential or you could lose them.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You have the interest now in the best means by which to please friends who mean much to you or with whom you would like more contact in the future.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You now find that most everyone you contact is in the mood to think out ways to have more prosperity and you can have more by going along with their ideas.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) New horizons look just beautiful to you this day and you are able to show that you are willing to go along with a fine new plan that is developed.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Now you have some highly interesting means by which to

change methods that are worn out and inefficient in doing whatever faces you now.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Begin this time by finding out what is expected of you by those you regard as your important partners and come to a better understanding with them.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You have many tasks to do and you can get them done quickly and effectively you would be wise to put aside pleasures for the moment and achieve big results.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Think out what you would most like to do to then lose no time in making the arrangements and the appointments that will bring this in being.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is your day to make sure that you do what your family desires or expects of you and so build up a better rapport with your own clan.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Take some time out to show your interest in your daily routines by perfecting them and doing something gracious for those with whom you are usually allied.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Money money is at the centre of your thoughts and rightly now for how can you do the things vital to your welfare without an abundance of assets.

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The tender documents are available at JPMC offices in the Amman Supply Department. Application for tender documents should be accompanied by a non-refundable fee of JD 125 for each set of tender documents.

The closing date for submission tender is 14:00 hours local time Thursday, 6th, Feb. 1992.

Wasef Azar
Managing Director

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For reservation please call: 03-31-6250

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMARA HIRSCH
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NINE PLUS ONE EQUALS TEN

Both vulnerable. East deals.
NORTH
♠ J 7
♥ 8 6 4 2
♦ Q 10 7 6 3
♣ 8
EAST
♠ 8
♥ K J 10 9 8 2
♦ A J 5 3
♣ K 10 9
SOUTH
♠ A K Q 10 9 4 2
♥ A Q 7 4
♦ Q 7
♣ Void

The bidding:
1♥ 4♣ Dbl Pass
Pass Pass

Opening lead: Six of ♠
The good book tells us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. At the bridge table, that's a sure-fire formula for going broke—but there are exceptions.

Once East had opened one heart, South gave up all thoughts of slam and simply made the value bid. West's double can be attributed either to a fit of pique or knowledge of declarer's ability; we would not have been confident of a double of six spades!

West led the singleton heart and East made the good technical play

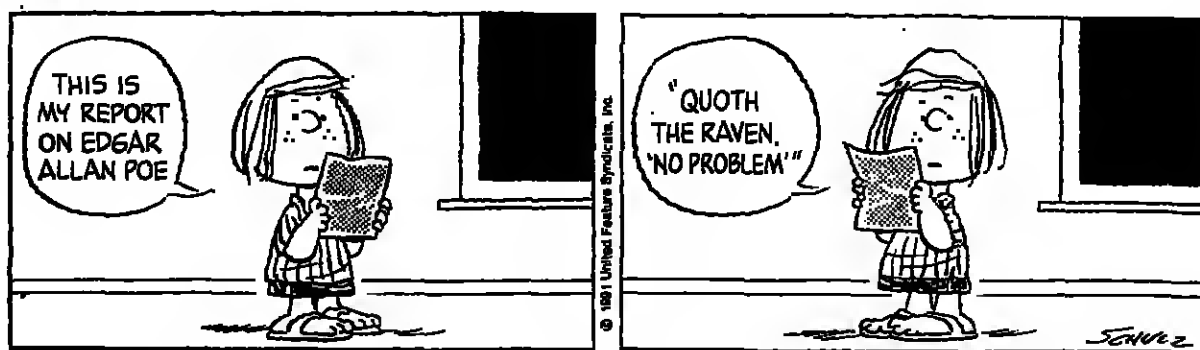
of the nine—West surely was not leading away from the ace, so it cost nothing to discover, who held the queen. Declarer now had nine tricks, seven trumps and two hearts, and the 10th could come only from a heart ruff. So South won the queen and pitched the ace of hearts on the table and the contract out the window in one fell swoop.

West ruffed away the ace of hearts and returned a trump. Although declarer was able to ruff a heart in dummy, he was back to the nine tricks with which he had started—down one.

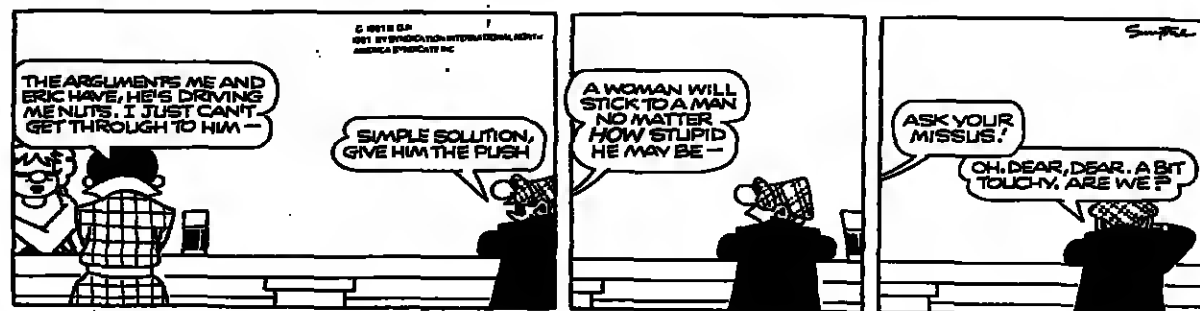
Even had there been no one-heart opening bid, declarer's play was less than perfect. Getting a heart ruff was vital, but so was preserving the ace of hearts as a winner. All declarer needed to do to fulfill the contract was to lead a low heart at trick two, surrendering a trick immediately that would have to be lost in any event.

Suppose West ruffs and returns a trump. Declarer wins in hand, ruffs a heart with the table's jack, returns to hand with a club ruff and draws the rest of the enemy's trumps. Then the ace of hearts and declarer has ten tricks—nine major-suit winners and a heart ruff.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Harris

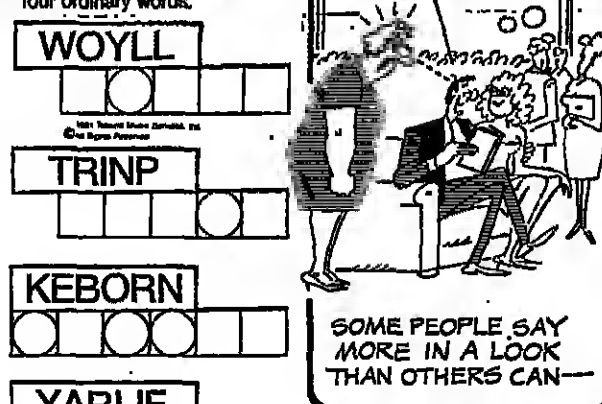


"Even your hair doesn't want to be near you when you're grumpy—that's why you're bald!"

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Bob Lee

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



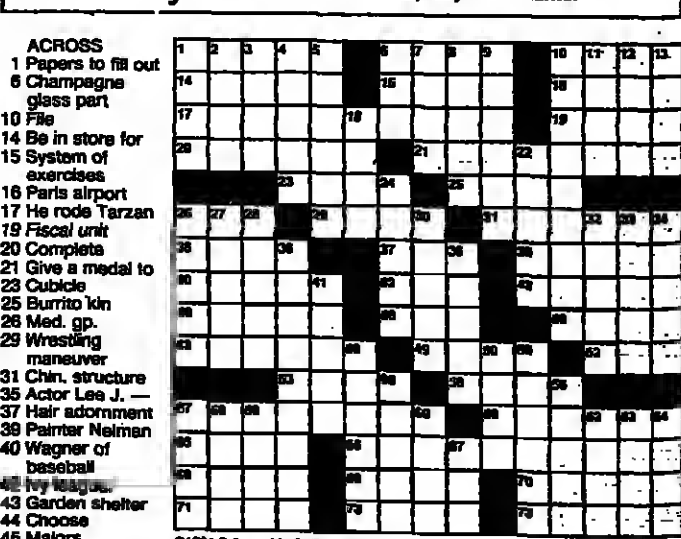
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

(Answers tomorrow)

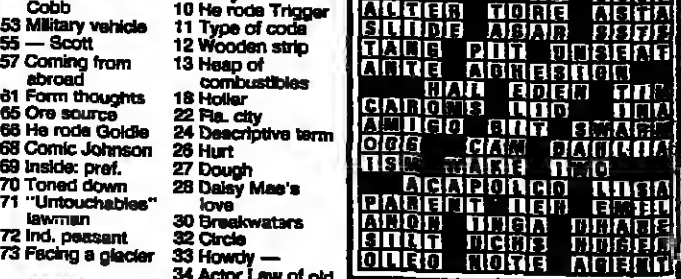
Yesterday's Jumbles: POWER GUILF FONDLY SQUIRM
Answer: The hardest thing to raise in a garden—YOURSELF

THE Daily Crossword by Raymond Hamel



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Yesterday's Puzzle Solved:



56 First appearance, 57 End of terms, 58 No more than, 59 Indy sleeping places, 60 Old fogey, 62 Concerning, 63 —the line (abey), 64 Tardier, 67 Tiddler.

Japan eases limits on real estate lending

TOKYO (AP) — Overruling objections from the central bank, the government Friday lifted limits on real estate lending in an attempt to stimulate the economy.

Real estate, perhaps this country's most precious commodity, gave Japanese corporations the collateral they needed to move ahead with the ambitious investments that helped make its economic juggernaut.

After speculators pushed land prices sky high, however, the

government ordered banks in April 1990 to tighten loose limits on lending for real estate investment.

The cabinet decided to lift those restrictions on Dec. 31 after reviewing a special report by the National Land Agency that showed prices had levelled off.

Finance Minister Tsutomu Hata said the decision was made to cushion a drop in land prices that could be harmful to Japanese businesses.

The National Land Agency re-

port showed residential land prices in Tokyo in July had fallen one per cent from a year earlier, while industrial land prices fell 0.3 per cent. Residential real estate prices in the western city of Osaka fell 15.3 per cent and industrial prices fell 8.9 per cent.

Annual growth in nationwide land prices slowed from about 17 per cent in January 1990 to about three per cent in July 1991, the report said.

Industry and political figures have pressed for months for lifting the restrictions to help stimulate the slowing economy.

But economists said the decision was unlikely to substantially increase lending to cash-short firms because banks are constrained by the need to maintain higher assets, relative to their lending, to meet standards set by the Geneva-based Bank of International Settlements.

"This is purely symbolic. It removes the stigma from lending to real estate firms, but the banks aren't going to change their be-

haviour because of it," said Richard Koo, senior economist at Nomura Research Institute.

He said the move wouldn't do much to ease a credit crunch that is restricting investment, especially among small- and medium-size Japanese firms.

"It's healthy that the banks are now putting more emphasis on profitability than on expansion of market share through lending, but the change comes at a bad time," he said.

But Kenneth Courtis, strategist at Deutsche Bank in Tokyo, said the decision could help credit-strapped companies by propping up the value of their land holdings.

"The focus is on commercial real estate. They need to maintain prices at an inflated level because so much lending is tied to land prices," Mr. Courtis said.

Arguing that the economy still faces strong inflationary pressures, Bank of Japan Governor Yasushi Mieno has lobbied

against easing limits on lending for real estate.

The bank has generally stood alone recently in its reluctance to ease the interest rates to stimulate the economy.

"They have wiped out the speculators, the banks are on the run and brokers are over a barrel. There's no risk that prices will shoot up again," Mr. Courtis said.

Japan's most expensive commercial land, according to the National Land Agency, is in Tokyo's Ginza shopping district, where a square metre was valued at 38 million yen (\$280,000). The costliest residential land was in Tokyo's central Chiyoda Ward, at 12.3 million yen (\$91,000) per square metre.

Mr. Hata said the finance ministry would monitor growth in lending and restore the limits if it expands too quickly. It also will tell financial institutions not to make loans for speculative land deals, he said.

Castro favours foreign investments, not capitalism

HAVANA (Agencies) — President Fidel Castro invited foreign firms to invest in Cuban tourist hotels but said Cuba will not abandon socialism.

Mr. Castro said overseas investors in joint ventures with Cuba in tourist hotels would recover their investments quickly.

"Where else could they get their money back in such a short time?" he asked.

Mr. Castro declared, however, that Cuba "is not disposed to return to capitalism."

"Ours is a pure tourism — without gambling, without drugs, without prostitution — and it is not in contradiction with our principles," he said.

Under most joint venture tourist hotel contracts, Cuba owns 51 per cent of the business while the foreign investors own the rest and are free to send their profits out of the country.

"Our partners contribute capital, technology and part of the market and Cuba contributes construction materials, a skilled work force and personnel with a higher scholastic level than in other countries," Mr. Castro said.

He said that the hard currency Cuba earned from tourism "is immediately used to attend to the needs of the population."

Mr. Castro said that 1992 would be a "trial by fire" — a year of more oxcarrots on the farms, more bicycles in the streets and fewer buses in town. He said Cuba might have to get by with a third of the fuel it had in "normal times."

Mr. Castro's remarks were made at a forum which brought together 1,200 people ranging from Cuba's most distinguished scientists to a Havana housewife who knitted a gasket for heavy vehicle motors, Prensa Latina said.

They presented ideas for everything from horse-drawn "multi-ploughs" to high-tech electronic sensors, the official news agency said in a dispatch monitored in Mexico City.

Cubans have long prided themselves on devising clever ways to do without the U.S. imports

halted 30 years ago by a cold war economic embargo. In Havana one can find Russian truck transmissions powering pre-revolutionary American luxury cars, and families who own two '57 Chevrolets — cannibalising one to keep the other running.

The fall of Soviet communism and the abrupt loss of Soviet Bloc imports that had kept the economy afloat has put that resourcefulness to its toughest test.

The loss of Soviet petroleum is the most devastating.

After supplies began dwindling last year, gas was rationed, hundreds of factories were closed, public transport was cut and farm machinery was taken out of the fields.

Mr. Castro said earlier this month that Cuba did not get a "single drop" of Soviet oil in December.

Mr. Castro has resisted the tide of change redrawing the world by clinging to one-party rule and central economic planning, defying calls for reform and continuing to meddle in every level of the nation's affairs.

"The years haven't been able to defeat the strong figure garbed in the eternal olive drab uniform, nor the elephantine memory that recalls the tiniest details, nor his mental agility and thirst for knowledge about the widest range of subjects," it said.

Prensa Latina, the news agency, said Mr. Castro warned in his speech of the oil cutbacks.

Mr. Castro said there would be more transportation cuts, new electricity conservation measures, even fewer farm machines, and more bicycles.

Cuba acquired 200,000 bicycles in 1991 and began introducing horse- and ox-drawn farm machinery. Mr. Castro said the government will build or buy another million bicycles in 1992.

Although each new austerity measure moves the island closer to a pre-industrial society, Mr. Castro insists Cuba's future lies in the realm of science. Despite the economic crisis, he has poured millions into biotechnology and



Fidel Castro

genetic engineering.

Cuba's survival depends on finding "scientific and technical" solutions to the "scarcity of fuel and other limitations stemming from the disaster in the socialist world," he told some investors.

Mr. Castro also promised to reveal his latest plans for coping with the crisis in the next few days.

Cuba has been quietly preparing for a complete fuel cutoff what Mr. Castro calls the zero option — for more than a year.

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Financial Markets

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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close	Tokyo Close
	Date: 19/12/1991	Date: 20/12/1991
Sterling Pound	1.5590	1.5759
Deutsche Mark	1.6347	1.6580
Swiss Franc	1.3870	1.3642
French Franc	5.3310	5.2495
Japanese Yen	129.20	127.53
European Currency Unit	1.2550	1.3225

* USD Per SYG

** European Opening @ 8:00 a.m. GMT

Inter-currency Interest Rates

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	4.62	4.25	4.25	4.12
Sterling Pound	11.00	10.81	10.68	10.56
Deutsche Mark	9.75	9.56	9.56	9.43
Swiss Franc	8.50	8.25	8.12	8.12
French Franc	10.12	10.12	10.12	9.93
Japanese Yen	6.12	5.93	5.65	5.43
European Currency Unit	10.68	10.68	10.56	10.31

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	358.25	6.85	Silver	3.875	0.083

* 21 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6760	0.6780
Sterling Pound	1.2551	1.2614
Deutsche Mark	0.4404	0.4426
Swiss Franc	0.4953	0.4978
French Franc	0.1288	0.1294
Japanese Yen	0.5256	0.5322
Dutch Guilder	0.3905	0.3926
Swedish Krona	0.1302	0.1308
Italian Lira	0.0579	0.0582
Belgian Franc	0.02136	0.02147

* Per 100

Other Currencies

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.7640	1.7720
Lebanese Lira	0.0765	0.0775
Saudi Riyal	0.1799	0.1806
Kuwaiti Dinar	—	—
Qatari Riyal	0.1832	0.1840
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2000
Omani Riyal	1.7305	1.7390
UAE Dirham	0.1832	0.1840
Greek Drachma	0.3755	0.3755
Cypriot Pound	1.5100	1.5210

* Per 100

CAB Indices for Amman Financial Markets

Index	11/12/1991 Close	18/12/1991 Close
All-Share	127.68	129.35
Banking Sector	105.44	105.82
Insurance Sector	128.45	128.35
Industry Sector	160.69	163.13
Services Sector	143.20	143.86

December 31, 1990 = 100

Greeks expect more austerity next year

ATHENS (Agencies) — The conservative government has admitted that its economic stabilisation programme has not managed to reign in a widening budget shortfall.

The shortfall, which the European Community (EC) estimated in a recent report at about 450 billion drachmas (\$2.3 billion), will delay efforts to bring the economy out of recession and lead to more austerity in 1992, officials said.

"Our fiscal policy has to aim at the continuous and steep decrease of deficits," a joint statement issued by the finance and economy ministries said.

It said cutting the deficits was necessary to ensure Greece "full and equal participation in the economic and monetary union of Europe."

The EC report said targets set by the government in its 1991 deficit budget will not be attained.

The expected budget shortfall is attributed to the government's inability to collect enough taxes, sell off more than 20 debt-ridden state-controlled companies and go through with the issue of

public bonds tied to real estate. "We are expecting less tax revenues in comparison with the estimates," the joint statement said. The government expects to collect 200 billion drachmas (\$1.05 billion) less than its plan.

The government, elected in April 1990, has been so far unable to implement a three-year economic programme which aims at reducing a total public debt of more than \$100 billion, cutting inflation and trimming Europe's largest civil service.

The EC has tied many of the goals to a \$2.53 billion loan, of which the first instalment of \$1.15 billion was disbursed in March.

Last month the government issued an appeal to industrialists, wholesalers and shopkeepers asking them to cut profit margins in order to keep inflation within limits set by the EC for 1991.

The government hopes to bring inflation down to 16 per cent this year from 22.3 at the end of 1990. But increases of 20 per cent and more for consumer goods had inflation running at about 17.9 per cent in late September.

The austerity measures and

skyrocketing consumer prices have taken their toll on the government. Public sector strikes and sit-ins have become almost daily occurrences, while the government's popularity has been slipping in recent public opinion polls.

Meanwhile, Greek National Economy Minister Efthymios Christodoulou said Greece should join the European Monetary Union (EMU) as early as possible.

"If we do not join the EMU in its early stages then the gap separating Greece from other Community members will constantly widen and it will become increasingly difficult to participate at a later stage," Mr. Christodoulou told parliament.

He said that as a first step the drachma should enter the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM) before 1994.

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U.S. aide sees recognition for some Soviet republics soon

BRUSSELS (R) — A senior U.S. official has said Washington would soon recognise former Soviet republics as independent, starting with those Secretary of State James Baker visited this week.

Mr. Baker made a four-day trip to the republics of Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

The official, who briefed reporters on condition he would not be identified, shared some of the conclusions arrived at by Mr. Baker.

"With respect to those ... that we visited we're talking about recognition sooner rather than later," he said. This would begin by the end of 1991, starting with those republics.

The new commonwealth being created out of the Soviet Union would "make economic reform more difficult and predicting defence strategy almost impossible," the official said.

Mr. Baker and his entourage were in Brussels for a NATO foreign ministers' meeting.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, one of the leaders Mr. Baker met, has moved boldly over the past few days to consolidate his power and close down the union's central government.

Mr. Yeltsin is a leader of the new Commonwealth of Independent States.

"I think we will be dealing with a number of sovereign independent nations that may or may not have an agreement between them providing for a common defence arrangement," the U.S. official said.

Mr. Yeltsin has said republics that join the commonwealth would participate in a defence alliance providing central command of the armed forces, as well as the nuclear arsenal.

The United States and its Western allies have been pushing

the old Soviet Union to make the bold reforms needed to convert their disastrous Communist economy to a free market system.

But Mr. Baker found that like the leaders of the former central government the republic leaders do not have a complete understanding of what a free market is or requires," the official said.

"This is a tough process trying to convert an economy to a free market," he said.

The former republics in practice are all one economic unit but the commonwealth arrangement will probably not create a common economic space and so moving to a free market system would be more difficult, he said.

The speed and precision with which Mr. Yeltsin closed down the central government has raised the question of whether he had in fact staged a silent coup.

But the official said Baker did not believe this was the case.

He commented that Mr. Yeltsin and other republic leaders had been democratically elected and that their actions were carried out peacefully and "pursuant to the will of the people."

EC to recognise republics

Meanwhile, European Community (EC) officials said Friday if the former Soviet republics agree this week on a new commonwealth, the EC nations could recognise them as early as Monday.

"I hope all this can move really quite fast," British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said of the recognition process following an emergency meeting of EC foreign ministers.

"I would expect that recognition of the republics that are going to form the new Commonwealth of Independent States would come quickly, maybe within a matter of days," Mr. Hurd said.

"If the former (republics)

agree, then there are no more objections" as long as they make a commitment to democracy and arms control, said Dutch spokesman Dig Isha after an ad-hoc meeting of EC states.

The Netherlands, which holds the EC presidency, said a crucial meeting in Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, Saturday could decide the speed with which the republics are recognised.

The republics are expected to endorse and broaden the new commonwealth that is replacing the Soviet Union.

If everything goes according to plan, "it could be a done deal on Monday," Mr. Isha said.

"Much will depend on the meeting they are holding at Alma Ata," he said.

"I would hope that out of that meeting would come the kind of assurances on both the arms control aspects and the Soviet debt which ... are needed for general Western recognition of the republics."

But Belgian Foreign Minister Mark Eyskens said nuclear assurances should be more of a guideline than a precondition.

"Because it is not with on-recognition that you will solve the nuclear problem," he said.

The NATO allies already prepared Thursday to recognise the Soviet republics if they commit themselves to democracy, free market economics and arms control, officials said Thursday.

At the United Nations Soviet Ambassador Yuri Vorontsov said Friday he expected a request to the United Nations next week asking that the Soviet seat go to Russia.

Answering reporters' questions, Mr. Vorontsov, who is this month's Security Council president, said he "personally" expected a letter asking for the name change.

Diplomats, who spoke on con-

dition of anonymity, said Mr. Yeltsin was sending a letter to the permanent members of the Security Council — the United States, Britain, France and China.

They said it was assumed he would send one to president Mikhail Gorbachev as well as leader of the internationally recognised Soviet Union.

The letter says that Russia is preparing to assume the responsibilities and duties of the former Soviet Union and appeals for support to occupy the Soviet seat, they said.

However, only British Prime Minister John Major has received his copy, the diplomats said, though the others anticipated receiving them shortly.

If Mr. Yeltsin meets no opposition from leaders of the other republics this weekend, little commotion was expected in the United Nations on the name change. The other newly independent states could join separately in the future.

Meanwhile, instability within the Soviet Armed Forces is cutting safety levels and thefts of weapons are increasing, the head of Soviet military counter-intelligence said in an interview published Saturday.

Major-General Yuri Bulygin told the army daily Krasnaya Zvezda that internal rather than external factors posed the biggest threat to the armed forces.

He described these as "attempts to sap moral and psychological potential, turning the armed forces into an arena of political confrontation and ambitions, fanning the flames of national and religious fears."

His comments were the latest in a series of warnings by military commanders, worried that disaffection with falling living standards and uncertainty about the future could trigger dissent in the ranks.

Bosnian Serbs reject independence, proclaim separate republic

BELGRADE (R) — Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina Saturday proclaimed their own republic, setting the stage for the breakup of Yugoslavia's ethnically-mixed central republic.

Croats and Muslims, who together form a majority of Bosnia-Herzegovina's 4.7 million people, Friday said they would bid for international recognition as an independent state, outvoting the 32 per cent Serb minority.

The Bosnian Serbs bitterly oppose the move and want to remain associated with Serbia, but the vote of their unofficial parliament in Sarajevo brought closer the threat of inter-ethnic fighting like that in neighbouring Croatia.

The self-proclaimed parliament of the Serbian people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose debate was shown live on Belgrade television, voted unanimously to proclaim a republic from the Serbian New Year, Jan. 14.

This is one day before the European Community (EC) and a growing number of countries are expected to recognise the independence of any Yugoslav republic which meets certain conditions.

Among the conditions are that a republic must have recognised boundaries, which in Bosnia-Herzegovina are thrown into doubt by the Serbian move.

To preserve them, the Muslims and Croats would have to coerce the Serbs, who are scattered over many parts of the republic and who would look for help from the Serb-led federal army, as has happened in Croatia.

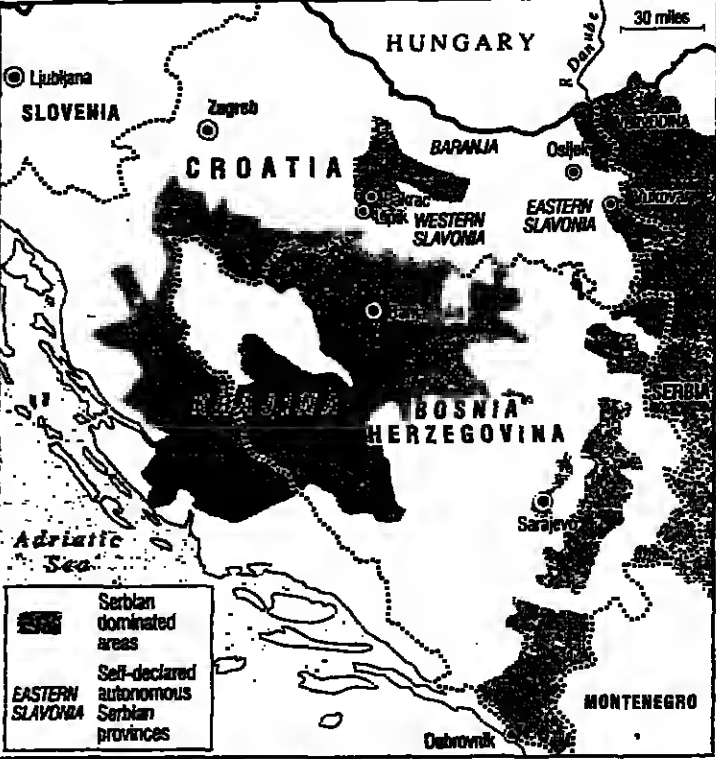
Failing this, the Croats might also want to join Croatia, leaving the Muslims with a rump republic unlikely to gain international recognition.

Of Yugoslavia's six republics, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia have also said they will seek recognition under the EC conditions.

Germany had led moves towards recognition, and the Yugoslav federal government Friday delivered an angry note to its charge d'affaires in Belgrade accusing Bonn of a "hostile act against the unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia."

The federal assembly, attended only by Serbia and its ally Montenegro and some Bosnian delegates, met Saturday in Belgrade to debate the EC proposals.

Both chambers adopted a resolution condemning the propos-



als, saying they violated international law and encouraged the continuation of armed conflict in Yugoslavia.

It also called for the urgent dispatch of United Nations peacekeeping forces — a demand the U.N. has so far resisted.

Serbia and Montenegro insist that Yugoslavia still exists and they have no need to seek recognition, but with many more countries including Russia moving towards recognising the breakaway four, they were running out of friends.

The U.S. State Department, which has so far declined to recognise the secessionists, declared Friday that it did not view the collective presidency — now reduced to Serbia and Montenegro — as speaking or acting in the name of Yugoslavia.

Washington said it regretted Friday's resignation of Prime Minister Ante Markovic, one of the few figures still seen as trying to represent all ethnic groups, saying Serbia forced him out.

It said it did not accept the rump presidency's right to appoint a successor to Mr. Markovic, who resigned saying he refused to approve a war budget to be funded mainly by printing money.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin said Friday his country might recognise Croatia and Slovenia and other Yugoslav republics as

independent states if a ceasefire was reached first.

Mr. Yeltsin was asked at a news conference ending his two-day visit to Rome whether Russia would extend diplomatic recognition to Croatia and Slovenia.

"For the moment we have taken no definitive decision because we are now studying this question, but our opinion is that if they reach a ceasefire we could recognise the independence of these republics," Mr. Yeltsin said.

Germany said Friday it would dispatch formal notes of recognition to Croatia and Slovenia by Christmas, and Iceland announced immediate recognition.

NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner said Friday that the alliance might take action if the conflict in Yugoslavia spilled over its borders and threatened neighbouring countries.

"Such a spilling over would create a very serious situation," Mr. Woerner told a news conference after a landmark meeting between NATO and its former Warsaw Pact foes.

"You can rely that the alliance would react to such a situation, would consult, and I think would take the appropriate measures," he said. "But I'm not prepared to speculate on any concrete action at this very moment."

South Asian leaders put high priority on alleviating poverty

COLOMBO (R) — South Asian leaders representing a billion of the world's poorest people agreed Saturday to make alleviation of poverty a priority, official sources said.

The leaders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka — the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) group formed seven years ago — focussed on action to raise the living standards of their people at their one-day summit in Colombo.

About 5,000 policemen backed by troops guarded the Sri Lankan capital because of fears that Tamil rebels fighting to set up an

independent states might try to disrupt the meeting. Security forces set up check-points and searched vehicles.

The meeting accepted a proposal by Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa to set up a commission of SAARC representatives to recommend ways to improve the plight of the people.

"We must be able to satisfy their basic needs of nutrition, clothing, shelter, health, family planning and primary education," Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, told the opening session.

They also discussed what Mr. Premadasa called the "twin evils of terrorism and drugs" affecting

the security and stability of the region.

"Terrorism has extended an insidious network of death and destruction across our borders," said Mr. Premadasa who took over the chairmanship of SAARC.

Bhutan's King Jigme Wangchuck said he was unable to attend the meeting originally scheduled for last month because of terrorism in his Himalayan kingdom. His absence led to the postponement of the summit.

"Bhutan, which until recently was a haven of peace and tranquility, is now engaged in a bitter struggle against terrorism," he said.

Cuomo pulls out of presidential race

NEW YORK (R) — The U.S. economy which has sent President George Bush's popularity plunging as he faces reelection gave him a bonus — Mario Cuomo, potentially his most dangerous rival, bowed out of the race.

Mr. Cuomo, the New York state governor, said the need to look after his own state's flagging economy has made it impossible for him to be a candidate for the Democratic nomination.

Mr. Cuomo's departure left the field to six relatively unknown politicians who in the months ahead will have to overcome their lack of national stature to fight Mr. Bush.

The New Yorker eoded months of speculation when he announced that he would not be a candidate because of his own state's budget problems. New York state has to close a \$4 billion deficit over the next three years, a crisis brought to a head by the national recession.

"I would be less than honest if I did not admit to you my regret at not having the chance to run for president," he told a packed news conference in Albany, New York.

The governor weighed his prospects for 70 days before announcing his long-awaited decision just 90 minutes before the

deadline expired to enter the New Hampshire state primary — the first of a series of primaries and Caucuses in which candidates vie for delegates to the party's national nominating convention.

Mr. Cuomo said that while he could enter the presidential contest after the New Hampshire primary, he would not because he feared he would complicate the race.

"I recognise that there are already in the field a number of excellent candidates that can move this nation towards a more inclusive, more progressive, more intelligent course. I will do all I can to help them," he said, clearly looking drained and disappointed.

Republicans crowed that Mr. Cuomo did not have the guts for the fight. After months of straddling the fence, Mr. Cuomo looked in the mirror and realised he wasn't up to running the country," said New York State Republican Chairman William Powers.

"For the first time in history, a fiscal crisis was more important to Mario Cuomo than his ego," Mr. Powers said.

Many political experts considered Mr. Cuomo, 59, the strongest Democrat who could enter the race to unseat Mr. Bush in the 1992 presidential election. Mr. Cuomo's withdrawal left

six Democratic candidates in the field but none with the national recognition of the three-term New York governor. Nor do any have Mr. Cuomo's eloquence or his ability to define the issues.

The governor said his decision was forced on him by the refusal of the Republican-controlled state senate to agree on a long-term budget plan.

"I'm not going to assume anybody had perverse motivation. I'll leave that to God and their conscience. I thought very hard about it (becoming a candidate) and it seemed to me difficult to escape the responsibility to deal with the budget now. Had they (the state legislature) made a budget, had it worked out well, it would have been different. But they didn't," Mr. Cuomo said.

Asked if this was the end of his future presidential ambitions, he said, "you would have to make your own analysis."

Polls showed that had Mr. Cuomo decided to run, he would have been the front-runner among the Democrats in a contest against Mr. Bush, whose own popularity has fallen to a 47 per cent approval rating, the lowest of his term.

Mr. Bush has been hard hit by his failure to turn the national recession around.

South African democracy talks end on high note

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa Saturday cleared the first hurdle towards a non-racial constitution when a historic two-day session of multiparty talks ended with messages of peace, hope and reconciliation.

The 19 parties attending the conference agreed to meet again by the end of March to work on an acceptable constitutional model which would give blacks full political rights for the first time in the country's history.

Five backroom working groups will start next month to prepare the agenda for that meeting.

"I can hardly believe my eyes and ears that we are sitting down together to debate an interim government and a non-racial constitution. It should have happened years ago," veteran white liberal parliamentarian Helen Suzman said.

Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) pre-

dicted a new constitution would be in place by Christmas 1992.

The main achievement at the conference, apart from getting a wide range of groups to sit down together, was an offer from the white government to open its doors to blacks, effectively according to anti-apartheid demands for a constituent assembly.

Anti-apartheid movements welcomed the offer, but said the government offer was still too vague for substantive comment.

The framework for future talks is a declaration of intent, signed by 17 of the 19 parties, stressing a commitment to multiparty politics, regular elections, an independent judiciary and a bill of human rights.

The government and the ANC, main protagonists at the talks, moved swiftly to patch up their differences after a display of verbal fireworks which threatened the amicable atmosphere.

Taiwan ruling party wins major victory in elections

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party won an overwhelming victory in the island's first general elections in over four decades Saturday.

The nationalists won 71 per cent of the 3.8 million votes cast in the National Assembly polls, election officials said.

The main opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won 24 per cent of the votes.

Fifteen other small parties took the remainder of the votes.

The elections, part of democratic reforms that began with the lifting of martial law in 1987, were called to choose 225 deputies.

Unrest in Phnom Penh as Khmer Rouge delay return

PHNOM PENH (R) — Police and students fought pitched battles in the streets of Phnom Penh Saturday night after demonstrators protesting against corrupt officials attacked two police stations.

One demonstrator was hit in the chest and critically injured as police opened fire to hold back the crowds.

"He's dead, he's dead," a young man shouted as the bleeding victim was taken away.

Reporters at one police station described a scene of total confusion. Police were shooting, mostly in the air, and dropping flares from upper windows.

Student leaders tried to control the crowd as thousands of people went on the rampage, tearing down buildings in the compound where an unknown number of officers were holed up.

At another station, the scene of battles between police and students earlier, angry police fired hundreds of rounds into the air to keep back protesters.

An armoured personnel carrier careered through the streets with 12 soldiers onboard letting off gunfire. At one point it rode up on a sidewalk, sending people fleeing.

It then mowed down two motorcyclists. They escaped but their bikes were crushed.

Unrest of this kind had not been seen in Cambodia during the present government's 13 year rule or the four-year Khmer Rouge reign of terror that preceded it.

Four previous days of violence forced Khmer Rouge guerrilla leaders to cancel their planned return to the city. A meeting of the Supreme National Council — a key element of the complex U.N. plan to end 13 years of civil war — was called off.

Prime Minister Hun Sen said Friday night the demonstrations threatened the peace process. "This could mean prolonging the Cambodian war," he said in a radio address.

U.S. sends aid to Armenia

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States donated \$15 million worth of dairy products and wheat to food-short Armenia, the first instalment from \$165 million in U.S. aid promised to the Soviets.

The donations to Armenia could begin arriving in early January, deputy U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said. She said the Agriculture Department would act soon on other proposals to provide humanitarian aid to other parts of the Soviet Union.

"The situation in Armenia is extremely critical," said Alexander Arzumanyan, Armenia's ambassador to the United States and Canada. He said there were "serious food shortages."

The U.S. administration offered the humanitarian aid to the Soviets last month at the same time it extended more credit guarantees for Soviet purchase of U.S. food and feed.

The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America was selected to oversee distribution of the \$15 million worth of butter, butter oil, dry milk and wheat.

Armenia to reopen nuclear plant

Meanwhile, the Armenian government has decided to restart its sole nuclear power plant in a bid to overcome a critical energy shortage, local agencies quoted a government minister as saying Friday.

"Given the hopeless position in the Armenian energy sector, the government has decided to take the republic's nuclear power station out of mothballs," the Snark Agency quoted Energy Minister Ruben Tsiftalyan as saying.

"The first reactor will be brought on to line next year," he told a news conference in the republic's capital Yerevan.

An official at the Armenian permanent mission in Moscow said the government would take a final decision later.

Armenia has been suffering energy shortages since it shut down the Medzamor Power Station in 1989.

A gas and petrol blockade by neighbouring Azerbaijan, engaged in a bloody territorial dispute with Armenia, has crippled industrial production.

"From today all industrial enterprises will be closed," Snark quoted Mr. Tsiftalyan as saying. He said the republic was getting only a sixth of the fuel it needed and had no choice but to open the station.

Azerbaijan said Friday it would end its blockade, but gave no further details.

The Medzamor plant, 25 kilometres west of Yerevan, was closed down in early 1989 after a public campaign in the wake of the April 1986 accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station. Public concern was also promp-

ted by the December 1988 earthquake which killed tens of thousands of people in Armenia. Experts said the plant was not damaged by the quake but experts feared there could be further seismic activity in the region.

The Nega Agency quoted Mr. Tsiftalyan as saying the station, which experts believed was completely safe, should be working by the end of 1992. He added the republic would be able to export energy for hard currency once the second reactor opened in 1993.

Soviet news agency (TASS) later said most schools in Yerevan were closed, hospitals taking only urgent cases, and industry, except firms providing essential services, was at a standstill.

"To describe the present situation in Armenia as a fuel and energy crisis is a complete understatement," it said.

"The situation has gone beyond the point of crisis. The only word for it is catastrophic."

Most schools sent children home a week ago and told them not to come back until Jan. 25, the agency reported.

Underground storage reservoirs had enough gas left for only two days and supplies were sufficient to keep thermal power stations running until Dec. 25 at the latest.

Azerbaijan wants peace talks

In a separate development, Azerbaijan President Ayaz Muttalibov said Friday he would meet Armenian leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan this weekend and try to work out ways to end the bloody conflict between the two southern Soviet republics.

The talks were due to take place on the fringes of a meeting of republican leaders in the Kazakh capital Alma Ata to discuss a Commonwealth of Independent States to replace the Soviet Union.

"We will meet in Alma Ata to start peace negotiations," Mr. Muttalibov told Reuters in an interview in the Azerbaijani capital Baku.

He said Nagorno Karabakh, an Armenian-dominated enclave within Azerbaijan claimed by both sides, would be the main item on the agenda of talks with Mr. Ter-Petrosyan.

"We will talk about a ceasefire," Mr. Muttalibov said. "We will lay the foundations, because if we keep fighting each other neither Azerbaijan nor Armenia will achieve full independence."

It was not clear whether Mr. Ter-Petrosyan would take him up on the offer of new dialogue, which is likely to be opposed by nationalist Azeris who demand tougher action against Armenian militants. The last round of peace talks collapsed in November with the crash of an Azerbaijani helicopter in Nagorno Karabakh which killed 25 people.

COLUMN
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World's richest lottery pays out \$1.3 billion

MADRID (AP) — The lottery billed as the world's richest rained a record \$1.3 billion in tax-free winnings on thousands of ticket-holders in a holiday tradition dating back almost two centuries. The five-digit grand-prize number picked Saturday in the Christmas lottery, known as El Gordo, or the fat one, paid 300 million pesetas (\$3 million) to holders of each of 95 tickets bearing the winning number: 47996. The winning number, which was sold in Madrid, was picked at 11:23 a.m., more than two hours after the drawing began. Since each of the 95 winning tickets cost \$300, most of them were split among friends, families, work mates and club members. The annual drawing showers its winnings on thousands across the country. It marks the start of the holiday season and is more popular in Spain than soccer or Santa Claus.

Mother pleads for son's imprisonment

COLOMBO (R) — A Sri Lankan judge heeded the pleas of a drug addict's mother and jailed the man for one year, the state-run Observer newspaper said. The woman told a Colombo court that her son had assaulted members of the household and demanded money to buy drugs. She begged the judge to jail him. The magistrate sentenced the man to one year in prison on charges of taking heroin, the newspaper said. It gave no other details.

Dutch Post Office kills Christmas cheer

AMSTERDAM (R) — Christmas cards posted in the Netherlands this year will not be franked with goodwill messages, the Dutch Post Office said. The post office said it dropped traditional Christmas postmarks after complaints that they appeared by mistake on cards announcing bereavements. "It did not seem fitting to have a postmark like that on cards about death or condolence," a spokeswoman said.

Woman sentenced to 5 years for defrauding suitors

PEKING (R) — A woman in southern China took advantage of newspaper lonely hearts columns to defraud more than 1,000 suitors nationwide, said a report seen Friday. After being fired from her job as a chemical worker in Yueyang, Hunan province, Wang Ke stole a photograph of an attractive woman from a photography studio and sent out nearly 2,000 copies in answer to advertisements from men seeking wives, the Dec. 17 edition of Publication Digest said. In each letter she asked for money to cover transportation to meet the hopeful swain, the news digest said. By late last year, Wang had received an avalanche of letters, some containing as much as 100 yuan (\$19) — just under the average urban monthly wage. More than 1,000 suitors sent a total of 5,230 yuan (\$968), a vast sum for China, it said. The woman never materialised, and the disgruntled men demanded an investigation. A Yueyang court sentenced Wang in March to five and a half years in prison for fraud. The newspaper did not say why authorities waited so long to publicise the case.

Dancer charged with attempting to kill rival

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — A U.S. exotic dancer was charged Thursday with giving a hit-man her 1968 Mustang car and a diamond earring to kill a rival named "Bambi." Diana Manetti, 26, was ordered held without bail on charges of attempted murder and soliciting murder. Police said Manetti had asked the unidentified assassin to fly to Hawaii where Bambi, whose real name is Joyce Massaghi, was performing. They said there was a long-standing conflict between the two women over a man. Police said they foiled the plot after Manetti gave the 30-year-old man an earring, the title to her car and \$1,000 and booked him on a flight to Honolulu. Manetti did not enter a plea at San Francisco Municipal Court and was ordered to return to court on Dec. 24.